

*Bringing Zombies Back to Life: An Autoethnographical Exploration of Alienation and Political
Dis/Engagement in Emerging Adulthood Within Late-Stage Capitalism*

Joanna Wasiak, Master of Arts

Department of Child and Youth Studies

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Child and Youth Studies

Faculty of Social Sciences, Brock University
St. Catharines, Ontario

© September, 2011

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Abstract	4
Preface	5
Zombie movies: A tool for analysis	6
Assemblages	7
Autoethnography	8
Parallel recursive analysis	11
1. The Outbreak	16
2. Un/Identifying the Enemy	29
3. The Search	41
4. The Quarantine	49
5. The Stupid One <i>From rationality to reason</i>	58
6. The Independent One <i>From individualism to the complex self</i>	72
7. The Kickass Woman <i>From feminism to becoming-woman</i>	81
8. The Zombie Child <i>From majoritarian to becoming-minoritarian</i>	96
9. The Escape	105
10. Happily Never After	112
Alternate Ending/Beginning – Final/first thoughts – <i>I guess I mean the middle</i>	122
References	132

Acknowledgements

I would like to give my utmost thanks to a few key members of the multitude that make up my life: Dr. Hans Skott-Myhre, for your endless supply of support and encouragement, and for always letting me do whatever I wanted without questioning me. Dr. Rebecca Raby, for always asking me very difficult, yet necessary, questions. Dr. Danny Tarrulli, for always reminding me to “be charitable”.

My family, who have always supported me in all my pursuits and desires, no matter how ridiculous. The Perkins family who always made sure I took a break, had a nice dinner, tea and chat. Gary Perkins for always listening, challenging and questioning. Thank you for all your support and understanding.

André Basson, Henry and Henrietta Swinkels, Jessica Mills, Kathy Skott-Myhre, Mahabba Ahmed, and Robert Hyland, for your open ears, critical comments and advice, and always enthusiastic support.

This research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Abstract

In this thesis, by employing an autoethnographic methodology, I am exploring why certain understandings, or assemblages, of political engagement come to have greater meaning in my life and why other assemblages may be more hidden and thus fail to contribute substantially to the meaning of political in my life. Using immanent, Marxist and post-Marxist theories, as well as a zombie narrative, the study will contextualize the movement of assemblages in my life within late-stage capitalism which is juxtaposed with the zombie apocalypse. The placement and displacement of certain understandings of the political within my life will be theorized within the crisis of constituent power that is revealed in an immanent framework. Furthermore, the crisis of the constituent in late-stage capitalism creates new forms of radical alienation which will also be examined. By exploring my own struggles in becoming political I will theorize why political disengagement in emerging adulthood appears to be increasing, as well as possibilities for new forms of political engagement in a late-stage capitalist context.

Preface

Emerging adulthood¹ is a time of life that might be seen as a space full of possibility, self-discovery, enrichment and joy. On the other hand, it simultaneously has the potential to be a space full of much confusion, crisis and alienation; a space of arrested adulthood². This is a space in which the dependency of childhood and adolescence is left behind as “legal” adult status is attained; however, “lived” adulthood still seems out of reach. Emerging adulthood is therefore a unique space in which one has access to adult autonomy without adult commitments and responsibilities, but also without full adult privileges.

Without the protection of adult privilege, the actions of young people, no matter what they may be, can often be interpreted and organized to fit the antagonistic role of the zombie. On the one hand, mainstream discourse often depicts young people as apathetic: mindless zombies, doing nothing but living lives of hedonism, individualism and over-consumption. On the other hand, when young people are engaged in radically political activities they can also be deemed zombies: monstrous, destructive, irresponsible and uncivilized. However, when young people are “appropriately” politically engaged, for instance active in governmental and community activities, they can be seen as no more than zombies either, merely conforming to the expectations of civic society.

From such a stance, the meaning of the political appears to be dead, or at least undead. As an emerging adult, I often find myself constructing the meaning of the political in my life based on the above antagonistic terms. It seems like no matter what I do or don't do, I remain alienated and feel like a zombie in all its various forms.

¹ Emergent adulthood is generally defined as the delay in transition to adulthood independence of people who are under 30 years of age, particularly in late-stage capitalist countries (Arnett, 2000; Côté & Allahar, 2006). It is argued that emerging adults take on characteristics or behaviours that are usually attributed to “adolescence”.

² The apparent contradiction between 'emerging' and 'arrested' adulthood will be discussed in more detail in chapter one.

This thesis is about my journey in overcoming this alienation. Or more accurately, it is about facing this alienation and transforming it into something more bearable and more livable by finding the joy and life that is already buried deep within it. It is about finding the life, and the political, in the zombie.

Zombie movies: A tool for analysis

Historically, the figure of the zombie is indeed fraught with many political implications. The zombie's origins can be traced back to Haitian voodoo superstitions about corpses that have been brought back from the dead by a sorcerer in order to serve him/her. The fear associated with this zombie is not of being hurt by one, but of becoming one. This can be seen to reflect the Haitian population's post-colonial fears of eternal servitude (Twohy, 2008).

The movie genre, and the popular culture version of the zombie took off in 1968 with the release of George Romero's "Night of the Living Dead" (Twohy, 2008). The movie is seen to mark the beginning of the horror genre, as well as the genre's affinity for political social commentary. Subsequent releases by Romero can be seen to provide commentary on capitalism, consumerism and class struggle (Bishop, 2010; Twohy, 2008). Romero's popularized version of the zombie is often seen to represent the excessive consumerism of America (Bishop, 2010; Towhy, 2008). In a way, Romero's zombie still retains some of its Haitian roots, its servitude being to capital, as opposed to a master sorcerer.

Although the genre is largely rooted in Romero's version of the zombie, in the last forty years the genre and the zombie have proliferated in many different directions. In my thesis, I will examine several different movies from the genre in order to extract diverse and rich visuals and metaphors through which the experience of my own political dis/engagement can be reflected. It should be noted that the purpose here is not to analyze the genre, but to use the genre as a tool for

analysis³. I am not looking to reveal anything about the genre, but will rather use the genre as an object of reflection⁴ in order to reveal something about my experiences of dis/engagement and alienation, and to structure my thoughts and writing.

Assemblages

This thesis is an assemblage: an assemblage made out of assemblages, and an assemblage about assemblages. To begin clarifying the term 'assemblage' I will use the example of a book. A book is made up of words and sentences that create meaning; each word and sentence is different, but together the words and sentences form one entity, a book. The more words and sentences you add, the more the meaning of the book changes and expands, but still remains that one book. In this sense, a book (or a thesis, if you will) is an assemblage of immaterial bodies. This example can also apply to an assemblage made up of material bodies, as it illustrates the structure, or composition, of an assemblage. Although an assemblage has a structure and/or composition to it, this structure is not organized through a hierarchical form. Just like no one word or sentence in a book is more important; all its parts work together to create the whole of its meaning.

What is significant is that material and immaterial bodies can form assemblages together. So to continue with the example of a book, the book itself is composed of material bodies: a cover, pages, ink, paper, pulp, molecules and so on. The language and ideas in a book, however, can be seen as immaterial bodies: words, meanings and discourses. The immaterial words, meanings and discourses are transmitted materially through the book, which can then enter into an assemblage with hands, eyes, and a mind. Immaterial meanings can enter into assemblage with a material human body (itself an assemblage of bodies), and possibly these ideas may enter an

³ I realize there is a wide literature in film theory pertaining to the zombie. Due to the limited scope of this thesis, however, I have chosen not to engage with this literature and leave my work on zombies largely anecdotal in this particular project.

⁴ Objects of reflection will be more fully explained in the upcoming section on autoethnography.

assemblage with actions, which can further enter into assemblage with ideas, and so on and so forth. In fact, differentiating between the material and immaterial can become impossible, as the two often meld into each other.

To further elaborate, an assemblage can be described as a rhizomatic formation of openings and closings. Let's take a simple example of a Mr. Potato Head. This toy consists of a plastic 'potato' head with holes in it, into which different appendages can be inserted and removed, placed and replaced. Some parts of Mr. Potato head do not have holes and so in these spots no insertions can be made. In its own way the Mr. Potato Head forms a simple assemblage. What I am referring to is, of course, somewhat more complex. The openings and closings of an assemblage are infinite, and attach to infinities of other assemblages. And what's more, these openings and closing are never in the same spot twice. They are always shifting, moving, opening, closing, opening, closing. In fact the Mr. Potato Head itself can be seen as an insertion into many assemblages: plastic pieces entering into assemblage with factory machinery in China; a packaged toy inserted into an advertisement read by a parent; an insertion into the hand of a child and further, simultaneously an insertion into discourses of childhood play and creativity.

There are, also, what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) term as 'dark assemblages,' which put an order or hierarchy to what assemblages can do, establishing which insertions can be made and which ones cannot. The dark assemblage appears to be made of more closings than openings. It is precisely these dark assemblages that this thesis will seek to explore: the assemblages that come to create my alienated understanding of the political that is full of closures. At the same time, this thesis will attempt to dismantle these dark assemblages in order to find the hidden openings while attempting to remain an open assemblage itself. The methodology of autoethnography will be used as a tool to dismantle and open up these assemblages.

Autoethnography

Autoethnographers shift back and forth, here and there, through several layers of consciousness: “first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract and resist cultural interpretations” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). This constant shifting is often aided by several ‘objects of reflection’ to expose different aspects of consciousness. These objects are often artifacts from the researcher’s life that act as a mirror of themselves and their surrounding culture. Such artifacts can be almost anything: a journal, a picture, a piece of clothing, a memory, a movie (or as in this case a movie genre) – anything that stirs a deep and meaningful emotion in the researcher. Any piece of writing can easily be used as an object of reflection, and thus, theory itself can serve as a formidable object of reflection.

Autoethnography is a postmodern research and writing method that falls into the autobiographical genre (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). As Richardson (2000) further comments, autoethnographies are “highly personalized, revealing texts in which authors tell stories about their own lived experiences, relating the personal to the cultural” (Richardson, 2000, p. 11). Autoethnography attempts to embrace the inherent bias of research and place the researcher at the centre as the subject of the research itself. As was mentioned earlier, this research stems from my own struggles with political dis/engagement, meaning that my own experience is central to the topic being explored by the current study. An autoethnography can be likened to a case-study. The study is detailed and about one particular phenomenon (the researcher), but its findings have a depth and richness that may inform future studies in significant ways.

The word ‘autoethnography’ can be broken down into three parts: ‘auto’ which means ‘self’, ‘ethnos’ which refers to culture, and ‘graphy’ which refers to the research process (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.740). Autoethnographies may place more emphasis on certain aspects over

others: more emphasis may be placed on the self, culture or research process, or a combination, depending on the researcher. This creates a large continuum of the different types of autoethnographies which are possible.

In order to give a brief and general overview of the types of autoethnography, I will focus on three broad examples; they are labelled as: reflexive ethnography, complete member research and evocative personal narrative (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

In reflexive ethnography, the primary focus is often on culture or subculture (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 740). This type of ethnography is mediated from the researcher's personal experience and point of view during the research. The researcher uses the self to learn about the 'other'. This comes from the notion that how we talk and write about others illuminates more about ourselves and how we organize the world than how they organize theirs (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p. 753).

In complete-member research, the researcher studies a setting that she is already a member of or becoming a member of (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 741). The researcher gives an 'insider's' view on the group she is studying. The focus here shifts to an almost equal division of focus between culture and self, whereas reflexive ethnography has a deeper focus on culture.

Evocative personal narratives, on the other hand, start from where the researcher already is. The primary focus here is the self, with culture and research process being more secondary. Here the researcher goes beyond their academic self and incorporates her personal life. "Their primary purpose is to understand a self or some aspect of a life lived in a cultural context" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 742). One of the main purposes of personal narratives is to evoke a response from the readers that prompts them to reflect upon their own lives with a new understanding.

By reviewing the above examples, one might begin to see the wide scope that methodology in autoethnography covers. Within these three categories, the structure, aesthetic,

and primary focal points of each individual autoethnographic text vary, creating a rich diversity of the texts that are possible.

For my autoethnography, I will be roughly focusing on a method of evocative personal narrative. I say 'roughly' because the objectives of this methodology appear to become somewhat complicated when combined with my thesis' theoretical underpinnings of immanence. It was explained that evocative personal narratives primarily focus on the self, with culture and research process being more secondary interests. Although the self is undoubtedly the central starting point of my autoethnography, the self in immanent terms is complex and immediately implicates culture and the research process as being part of that self⁵. In this way, I hope to show that my thesis is indeed somewhat more balanced than it would first appear.

A personal narrative is always in motion and flux as different readers come across the text, finding connections to their own lives; putting themselves into conversation with the text and the human researcher at its centre (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Evocative stories “long to be used rather than analyzed” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 744). “What are the consequences my story produces? What kind of person does it shape me into? What new possibilities does it introduce for living my life?” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 746). These are the issues that are of importance in evocative personal narratives. By exploring ourselves, we inevitably explore the ‘others’ we have come into collision with and so, “with understanding yourself comes understanding others” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 738).

Parallel Recursive Analysis

In her Master's thesis, Korrinne Weima (2008) creates the term 'parallel recursive analysis' to describe the writing methodology that she employs throughout her study. She likens the

⁵ This might be comprehended in more detail by referring to the beginning of chapter two, where immanence is more clearly explicated, and chapter six, where the complex self is discussed.

methodology to a long braid of hair:

following one fragment of hair with your eyes, notice how it weaves in and out – appearing recursively – yet remains parallel to the others. Similarly, I pull fragments of writing forward, and push others back, allowing them to appear and retract recursively, but always remaining parallel to the others. In other words, no fragment is ever forgotten, nor does it ever appear in exactly the same way. Instead, fragments are recursively brought forward – imploded into the next – to produce continually thickening parallel analysis (Weima, 2008, p.26).

This thesis will employ a writing methodology very similar to a parallel recursive analysis, weaving several textured threads together to form the analysis. The threads can be seen as my objects of reflection, with my reflection, or analysis itself, also being a thread running throughout the thesis. The first thread, or recursion, will serve as the structural foundation of the writing. As discussed above, I will be using the figure of the zombie as a metaphor to frame the discussion of political engagement and disengagement. Specifically, this will be done by using common plot and character devices that can be found throughout several zombie movies in order to anchor the thesis. This will be done in order to mimic the plot line of a zombie movie and thus provide this thesis with a central linear thread, or narrative. More abstract, nonlinear reflective pieces will be interwoven around the central linear piece. These pieces of writing will be integrated yet distinct, through the use of font and page formatting. The reason for having a linear plot line to anchor the thesis is to facilitate a deeper understanding for myself, and perhaps for the reader as well. The immanent theory and literature at the center of my study is notoriously difficult, complex and confusing. Many readers (including myself) need a linear progression in order to understand the implications and may feel lost otherwise; thus, by structuring this thesis around a linear thread of a plot line I hope to foster understanding and effective communication, as well as shape the

autoethnography as a narrative.

The second thread, or recursion, will focus on immanent, Marxist and post-Marxist theory. This recursion will also serve as another object of reflection. It will be woven, in and out, and through the zombie plot line and through the other two recursions. The crisis between constituent and constituted power, and the assemblages that come to form political engagement and disengagement will be revealed, juxtaposed, exploded and imploded through the interweaving of all the recursions.

A third recursion in the proposed study will be composed of personal reflections, memories and commentaries pertaining to my struggle in becoming political. Some of these pieces come from a blog I've been keeping throughout this process as a personal journal. Others come from notes that I've been taking throughout this process. There are others yet that have been constructed from memories, or are a combination of all the above. As was mentioned earlier, these pieces of writing may be more abstract and nonlinear. This recursion will not only reflect upon the other recursions, but also on the process of writing an autoethnography itself.

The final thread will focus on reflecting on the space of 'emerging adulthood' as well as some of the literature on youth dis/engagement. This thread will attempt to situate my personal experiences and struggles in relation to a broader context. The intent here is not to generalize my experiences to a broader population, but to examine how my experiences might be a part of and interact with this culturally constructed space.

As noted above, the threads and recursions will at times meld together, just like a braid of hair: sometimes it is difficult to tell where one strand ends and another one begins, the braid seamlessly incorporating more and more hair, or threads as it were, along the way. In this sense, parallel recursive analysis can be compared to an assemblage with constantly shifting openings and closings.

Contextualizing the writing of this study within an autoethnography may be in of itself a means to overcome the alienation found in the dark assemblage and dismantle it. This personalized writing and research style connects to the reader of the text intellectually and emotionally, thereby possibly reaching multiple audiences, academic and non-academic alike. Autoethnography reconnects the research process to our humanity by writing “from an ethic of care and concern” (Ellis & Bochner, p.742). Furthermore, I would argue that autoethnography is a process in which the method is “tool-and-result,” a term coined by Vygotsky to describe Marx's method of historical materialism (Newman & Holzman, 1993). In his preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx explains how the mode of production, or material forces, in a society conditions its social, political and intellectual life, and that “at a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production [...]. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters” (Marx & Engels, 1978, p. 4). The mode of production, or the material conditions, can be seen as the 'tool' which in its very expression creates its own limitations and thereby the 'result'. Marx continues:

No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself. Therefore mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, it will always be found that the task itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation. (Marx & Engels, 1978, p. 5)

One can see Marx's view of history as its very own methodology, at once a tool-and-result as material conditions themselves create the conditions for a new mode of production, transforming

themselves. Similarly, I would posit that autoethnography is a method of simultaneous theory and praxis because the autoethnographer's living self is at the center as the object of study. And thus theory and experience cannot help but meld together as each learning moment shapes one's experience and each experience shapes one's learning. In other words, autoethnography may bring the social and political together.

1. The Outbreak

*"The scene can be best described as mayhem."
- Night of the Living Dead (Romero, 1968)*

Although George A. Romero's (1968) *Night of the Living Dead* is often hailed as originating the zombie movie genre, the word 'zombie' is never mentioned throughout the entirety of the movie. In fact, the characters and audience of the *Night of the Living Dead* are given no information about what is going on for the first half hour of the film – approximately a third of the entire movie. And even when information is finally given on the radio and television, it is still unclear what 'those things' are and where they come from.

RADIO NEWS ANNOUNCER:

There is an epidemic of mass murder being committed by a virtual army of unidentified assassins. The murders are taking place in villages, cities, rural homes, and suburbs with no apparent pattern or reason for the slayings. It seems to be a sudden general explosion of mass homicide. We have some descriptions of the assassins. Eyewitness accounts described the assassins as ordinary-looking people, misshapen monsters, people who look like they're in a trance, and creatures that look like people but act like animals. (Romero, 1968)

Many zombie movies begin in chaos and confusion. Whether the movie starts in at the peak of the zombie outbreak, or just at its onset, it often is unclear what is happening and what exactly caused the outbreak. Often, it takes an actual, personal attack for the protagonist/s to even know that there is a problem. Only surviving an attack do characters begin to seek information about what is happening. And this is never made easy. Radios break, phone lines are down or cellphones die, cars crash into trees, and of course the room with the TV in it is always surrounded by zombies. When some sort of information is attained, it is seldom comforting or reassuring. In many cases what the main characters find out is that no one else really knows what's going on either. There is mass confusion about what is happening, the causes, and why seemingly ordinary looking people are viciously attacking other people. It's just another ordinary

day. But the world has changed. The people have changed.

Or have they?

In Wright's (2004) romantic-horror-comedy *Shaun of the Dead*, the protagonist, Shaun, is actually given information about what is happening in many different forms and has several encounters with zombies, but humorously fails to notice that there is anything wrong for quite some time. We see Shaun look at newspapers with huge headlines reading "HAVOC", "MUTILATED REMAINS" and "NEW SUPER-FLU SCARES PUBLIC"; however, Shaun is not really engaging with what those papers say. Shaun works in an electronics store selling televisions with news bulletins constantly playing in the background, but does not notice what is on the screen. Constantly, Shaun, as well as the audience are bombarded with both subtle and obvious information about what is happening. But Shaun is too distracted by his own personal life to really notice. His engagement with his personal life is also fairly limited, depicting Shaun as a sort of zombie not only to the world around him, but to his own life. As the movie progresses Shaun's lack of awareness becomes funnier as it becomes more and more absurd; however, the beginning of the movie is quite believable – an audience member not paying attention might not pick up on all the clues either. The chaos that is just beginning to ensue at the beginning of the movie often looks like the ordinary hustle and bustle of living in a busy and overstimulated culture. At times in the movie, it is unclear if one is looking at an actual zombie or just a regular person, mindlessly in the throes of everyday life.

On the one hand, what we see in some zombie movies is chaos resulting in panic and hysteria. On the other hand, in movies like *Shaun of the Dead*, we see chaos as daily life, which results in characters retreating into numbness. We often see the camera zoom in on Shaun with a dazed and empty look over his face.

What is the political?
I dunno... but it sure ain't me.

When I consider the word 'political' and what it means to me, the first thing that pops into my head is the word 'government.' In fact, I would say the words 'political' and 'government' are conflated in my mind. Even though in my time at university I have heard the term 'political' used in very different ways, I can never seem to remember the alternate meanings offered to me. Something about power relations... There is always a fuzziness surrounding this mysterious word. I seem to recall there's something MORE to it. But I don't know what that 'more' might be.

And so, no matter how hard I try to separate those two words – 'political' and 'government' – they seem to just fling back together. Nothing seems to be able to come between them.

When I consider the word 'political' I cannot help but feel confused. I feel like there is supposed to be power somewhere in that word. But I can never seem to find it. I lose patience. I don't want to be political! I am too lazy and when it comes down to it I don't really understand anything about it anyways. I don't want to have anything to do with the government. I don't get what the point of the government is and how I fit in it; how I have any part of it. I don't feel that my vote counts. The media always hypes the election in terms of prime ministers, but when you show up at the ballot box, none of the names look familiar. No one ever really taught me anything about how all this 'political' stuff works. I seem to recall a civics class in high school... but nothing really stands out about it. And I try to learn about it. But it's so fucking boring. I don't get how anyone can sincerely care about it. I don't feel like knowing more about the government is going to make it more official or real to me – the government does not represent me. It has nothing to do with me. I'm too busy anyways. Why on earth would I want to spend my extra free time on learning about the government when I could spend that time with my boyfriend, or my friends, or family? I'd rather take my dog for a walk.

In *Shaun of the Dead* (Wright, 2004) people appear to be utterly unengaged in their lives.

This depiction reflects a popular view that today's generation of young people⁶ are apathetic and not only politically disengaged, but socially disengaged as well. Young people, in the popular media, are often depicted as becoming increasingly self-absorbed, and significantly lacking interest and involvement particularly in the political arena (Cushion, 2007).

The majority of recent research on the topic, however, seems to reveal that the young people of today are not uninterested in politics per se, but rather are disillusioned by conventional

⁶ For the purposes of this thesis, the term 'young people' here will generally refer to young adults, or what Arnett (2000) has deemed "emerging adults". Emerging adulthood can be also referred to as "arrested adulthood" or "youthhood" and may actually stretch into the 30s and beyond (Côté & Allahar, 2006). Emerging adulthood will be more fully discussed later in this chapter.

politics which they deem as irrelevant to their lives (Keiser, 2000; Kimberlee, 2002; Henn, Weinstein, & Wring, 2002; Cushion, 2007). A common emerging theme in the literature is that young people do not like *traditional* politics, but have a dissatisfaction with their lack of involvement (Macintosh, Robson, Smith, & Whyte, 2003). A major limitation of conventional political science studies, media depictions and public discourse of political dis/engagement specifically related to youth, however, is that political engagement or participation is often too narrowly defined (White et al., 2000; Henn et al., 2002; O'Toole et al., 2003; Weller, 2006).

Part of the narrowness of the definition of political engagement comes from the fact that voting is often seen as a key indicator of political engagement (Henn et al., 2002). The image of low political engagement among young people is especially exacerbated by statistics that point to the decrease in percentage of young people that vote in elections. Several studies in the UK discuss this decline in voting by 18-35 year olds (Kimberlee, 2002; Henn et al., 2002). Similar trends have been cited for the United States and Canada (Blais & Loewen, 2009). What is often left out, however, is that the overall voter turnout has declined as well (McNally, 2006; O'Toole et al., 2003; Elections Canada, 2010). Although, rates of decline are often steeper for youth, it is important to note that this is not an isolated incident. In other words, it appears that adults are no more 'political' than young people are (Banaji, 2008; Arnett, 2007).

One thing that may perpetuate the view of youth disengagement is some of the academic work done in this area itself. Previously, most of the work done on political dis/engagement has been conducted within the political sciences (Henn et al., 2002; O'Toole et al., 2003). Trends that are revealed in this literature, although they can be highly detailed and accurate, can sometimes limit the discussion of alternative views by confining the meaning of political engagement to governmental and electoral realms. Other literature, seems to point out that youth disengagement is an incomplete view of young people. Narrow definitions of political engagement often exclude

youth and generally other forms of political engagement (Weller, 2006). In discussing Bhavnani's (1994) research, Henn et al. (2002) reveal that "young people *do* take part in various types of 'political' activity, although this action is often discounted from being 'political' by conventional political science and by young people themselves" (p. 168).

This is further revealed in a study by White et al. (2000). Through interviews and focus groups with youth, ages 14-24, across the United Kingdom, White et al. (2000) found that many youth perceived 'political activity' only as activities that related directly to the government. Others had broader views of what constituted political activity; however, the overall efficacy of any particular method (whether directly relating to the government or indirectly) was seen by most to be determined by whether or not the government listened and responded to the message being conveyed. It appears that for young people, politics get in the way of being political (Henn et al., 2002; Berry, 2008).

Based on previous research by Keiser (2000), Kimberlee (2002), Henn et al. (2002) and particularly White et al., (2000), it would appear that many young people conceptualize political engagement based on an abstract ideal of hierarchical power – constituted power. As was discovered by White et al. (2000), youth view power to be enacted if the wanted results are achieved; if the government responds to the message conveyed. In other words, youth only have power if the government responds and *lets* them have power. Governments, which are typically supposed to be the means of politicization, are for youth seen as the barrier, thus creating an antagonism between young people and the government. Political action by youth is often viewed as an oppositional action (me or us vs. the government) as opposed to an inclusive action (we are working with the government). Thus, the way youth conceptualize power is contradictory to the way they experience it, as when it comes to the government they feel *powerless*.

Where youth are feeling more powerful is in more participatory activities that they do not

deem as political because they may not be related directly to the government. Many young people in White et al.'s (2000) study were volunteering and taking part in issues in their local communities, such as protesting the closing of a hospital or park, but did not consider this to be political engagement. Similar sentiments were pointed out in studies by Keiser (2000), Kimberlee (2002), and Weller (2006). In other words, as the literature points out, a too narrow definition of 'political engagement' or action, may prevent many young people from being politically engaged and/or realizing that they are (Henn et al., 2002).

Although some literature surrounding the issue of political disengagement and engagement of young people addresses the limited definitions of the political, the literature in this area itself often does not expand the definition of political very drastically. Kimberlee (2002) outlines what he deems the 'alternative value' explanation for young people's non-participation in governmental politics. This explanation suggests that young people have turned away from governmental politics and instead turned their attention to other forms of politics, often referred to as 'New Politics' or New Social Movements (NSM) (Kimberlee, 2002). NSM theories suggest that the structure and interests of social movements have changed as a result of the shift to a postindustrial economy. It is proposed that young people born in the 1960s and onward have shifted their focus away from material needs and class relations⁷, and focus more on immaterial (or post-material) needs and identity politics (Pichardo, 1997; Kimberlee, 2002). NSMs are often operating outside of governmental structures and the concerns of many NSMs are often single-issue based and can include animal rights, environmentalism, anti-racist, feminist, and gay rights issues (Pichardo, 1997).

⁷ It is argued that generations born in the 1960s and on are different than previous generations that were born in the great depression era were more focused on 'sustenance driven' needs, and the generations after that who were born in the immediate post-war years who were more concerned with 'status and consumption' needs (Kimberlee, 2002).

Although literature on NSM points to an expansion of the political beyond governmental structures, literature focused on youth dis/engagement can nonetheless perpetuate the idea that politics should revolve around the state despite acknowledging NSMs. For instance, in the end, Kimberlee (2002) seems to conclude that no matter what the explanation about youth non-participation, citizenship, not politics, is at the centre of the discussion. Similarly, Keiser (2000) points out that, “two-thirds of young people are active volunteers is an under-publicized aspect of the new politics that is emerging. Young people are using direct service as a substitute for voting. They want to make the world a better place but do not think that politics is the way to do it” (p. 36). However, after laying out this alternative Keiser (2000) argues that, “it is up to the organizations that are mobilizing young people to serve their communities to encourage them to become involved in civics.” (p. 36). Keiser (2002) suggests that direct service is in many ways effective but would be more so if linked with engagement with public policy. There is certainly much validity to this statement; however, it seems that any potential alternative form of political engagement seems to lack legitimacy unless it is connected to the civic, or in essence, 'good citizenship'.

Banaji (2008) points out that the political and civic are not always compatible. Sometimes the civic is indeed framed around being a responsible citizen: loyal and obedient. This sort of view, however, can erase the politics of democracy, which is often being encouraged along side civic engagement – even though such a view dulls the kind of critical thought and engagement required in a democracy (Banaji. 2008). It appears that much of the politics that are recognized are not the politics of democracy, but rather politics that encourage responsible citizenship, or put in another way, responsible adulthood. This focus on responsible adult citizenship is illustrated to some extent by a study done by Cushion (2007) who examined depictions of young anti-Iraq war protestors in the UK press. Cushion (2007) found that depictions of youth protests were framed in

more positive terms when young people were part of large protests that included adults, particularly in pre-war coverage. News coverage of protests that included people of all ages, tended to comment on how young people's "comments were relatively 'sensible' and meaningful contributions to debates about the merits of going to war" (Cushion, 2007, p. 426). In contrast, once the war had started, public opinions polls revealed a shift of opinions (of the adult population) in favour of the war, and young protestors were no longer as frequently depicted as engaged citizens, but instead as truants.

In other words, young people are considered an interruption to everyday life (a disrupting force to normal, consumer-related activity) rather than as valued citizens, in the same way (older) protestors had been reported on just a month previously (to far greater encouragement). (Cushion, 2007, p.427)

Such an example suggests that if it is adulthood that legitimizes the conventional meaning of the political, youth-hood itself may seem to become a prerequisite for apathy, disengagement and political 'failure to launch'.

I wish I contributed more to society

*It's not really the voting thing that bugs me. Voting is really quite simple. I've voted before. It didn't make me feel any more 'political' than usual though. I still felt like I didn't contribute much because it's the idea of being an **informed voter** that really gets to me.*

*It feels like to be a good citizen I need to be informed and vote. But being informed takes work. I don't want to do this work. But because I don't do this work, I feel like I'm lazy. I feel like I really **SHOULD** do this work – I choose not to do it (or I try to but give up because I get bored)– and that makes me feel like I'm a lazy and bad citizen. I'd rather hang out with my friends, or watch a movie.*

*Sometimes even writing my thesis ties into being a good citizen. On the one hand, I love school and there isn't anything I'd rather be doing instead; I do it because I enjoy it and not because I see it as a means to an end. On the other hand, writing my thesis **IS** work – and sometimes, even though I enjoy it I can get caught up in the pressure of it and suddenly can start to view it as a means to an end (ie, getting into grad school and eventually having a job – the better my work is*

the better chance I have of being successful, etc.). My thesis itself can be about being a good citizen – I become someone who is informed, and someone who might eventually have a 'real' job. Someone who contributes.... sometimes if I'm not working on my thesis I can I feel like I'm a lazy bum who does not contribute to society.

A lot of my struggles with the political can be summed up to wanting to be a good person who contributes to society, like the heroes you see in the movies fighting the zombies. I don't want to be one who does not contribute, a bum, a hobo, a sponge, someone taking advantage of the system – living and reaping the benefits of society while not contributing – a zombie who only consumes.

In a sense my identity seems to be teetering between a binary: I want to be a good citizen, but feel that I fail to do what it takes to be one. On the other hand, I do not want to be a consuming zombie, but feel that I often am one. The writing of this autoethnography clearly complicates this binary. Much like some of the youth cited in MacIntosh et al.'s (2000) study, I am not completely ignorant of politics, but I do feel a dissatisfaction with conventional politics, and my lack of participation. It seems like I am somewhere in the middle of these two desires of being: the hero, the good citizen and, the bad, consuming zombie. I would like to situate this struggle and confusion, at least in part, to the stage of life I am currently experiencing and occupying.

I will start by lightly positioning myself within emerging adulthood. Emerging adulthood has been proposed by Jeffrey Arnett as an additional developmental stage in the life-course – following adolescence, and preceding adulthood – to account for the delay in transition to adulthood independence of people who are under 30 years of age, particularly in late-stage capitalist countries (Arnett, 2000, 2007; Arnett & Tanner, 2009; Côté & Allamar, 2006). Traditional markers of adulthood, such as marriage, child-rearing and financial independence, appear to be happening later than in the past. With the postponement of adult commitments and responsibilities and longer stays in education, the new stage proposed as emerging adulthood is “characterized by identity exploration, instability, self-focus, a feeling of 'being in-between', and

the perception of a range of possibilities” (Hendry & Kloep, 2010, p. 169).

I would like to note that emergent adulthood here is being used as way of positioning myself in relation to other young people, but that I do not necessarily adhere to Arnett's developmental model completely. Arnett's theory of emerging adulthood has come under much scrutiny; in particular, it has been criticized for being inadequately theorized as a developmental stage, lacking any evidence of universality, and failing to account for social-economic differences in any substantial way⁸ (Bynner, 2005; Côté & Bynner, 2008; Hendry & Kloep, 2010). Furthermore, Côté and Bynner (2008) argue that Arnett's theory relies too heavily on a psychological free-choice model, and “mistakes the coping mechanisms of many young people for freely chosen options to delay their entry into adulthood” (p. 251). However, it has also been acknowledged that emerging adulthood is a useful construct that reflects a reality for many young people in recent cohorts (Côté & Allahar, 2006; Côté & Bynner, 2008). Alternatively, Côté and Bynner (2008) propose that the emerging adulthood would be better explained as a social condition that has arisen from “changing economic conditions leading to a lowering of the social status of the young that is contributing to increasingly precarious trajectories, and in terms of the decline in the social markers of adulthood associated with the individualization process” (p. 251).

It is in this sense that I would like to apply emerging adulthood, as a social condition, rather than a developmental period. Furthermore, based on Côté and Bynner's interpretation of the situation, the term 'arrested adulthood'⁹ might be more useful in terms of my struggle in situating myself as a political subject. Emerging adulthood can be seen as a space arising from

⁸ Although just how inadequately theorized Arnett's model of emerging adulthood is is certainly debatable. Some of Arnett's earliest work already clearly situated emerging adulthood within cultural and economic conditions, and never claimed universality (Arnett, 2000). Furthermore, in more recent literature, Arnett (2007) challenges conventional views of developmental theory and suggests a more fluid conceptualization of development situated within constantly shifting historical, economical and cultural conditions, acknowledging that “eventually, the theory of emerging adulthood may be displaced by other theories as cultures and economies change in ways we cannot imagine today” (p. 81).

⁹ I will use terms 'emerging adulthood' and 'arrested adulthood' rather interchangeably throughout this thesis.

economic conditions, particularly unfavourable economic conditions (Arnett, 2000, Côté & Allahar, 2006; Côté and Bynner, 2008). There is some evidence to support that whether one identifies as an adult or not has a lot to do with one's sense of financial independence (Hendry & Kloep, 2010). However, the need for youth labour has decreased, except for in the more exploited areas of the labour market. Emerging adults are expected to take on adulthood, yet the financial means to take on adulthood responsibly are often difficult to attain for this age group (Côté & Allahar, 2006; Côté and Bynner, 2008).

If the legitimacy of the political lays in adult citizenship where does that leave those who have not or cannot attain adulthood? As passive and apathetic subjects? This question has to some degree been addressed by research in the new sociology of childhood and literature on agency, pointing to children and youth as active subjects¹⁰(Prout & James, 1990; James, 2004; Côté & Allahar, 2006). Further, several strands of theories have highlighted alternative forms of the political that engage with the everyday lives of the subjects in question, and move beyond the political framed solely within capital, and hence beyond the adult bourgeois citizen. Subculture theory, feminist theories, as well as neo-tribal theories (among others) can point to more expansive conceptualizations of the political where 'everyday politics' are considered and the personal is seen as political. Subculture theory focuses on neo-Marxist theories of class resistance. Subcultures are seen as a form of resistance expressed through style on a symbolic level. By taking symbols from the dominant middle-class, working class youth used them in new ways and thus subverted dominant meanings and reasserted working class values. Among its many critiques is that subculture theory largely ignores race and gender relations in its political conceptualizations (Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995). Feminist political theory can be then seen to fill the gap here in some ways and expand the political beyond class relations and the public

¹⁰ Due to the limited scope of this project, agency, although relevant in some ways, will not be discussed here.

domain. Feminism posits the private domain as political where the lives and experiences of women and youth (as well as men to some degree) have been largely situated and often dismissed from the political arena (Jagger, 1983). Subculture and feminist theory both share an element of consciousness raising and agendas for social change. Alternatively, neo-tribal theories offer “a politics of survival rather than resistance” (Riley, Griffin & Morey, 2010, p. 348). Here disengagement from dominant institutions of power can be seen not as apathy but instead as an engagement in the creation of spaces in which communal hedonism and pleasure is experienced. Cultural leisure and consumption practices of youth are framed here as 'everyday politics' in which young people take part in more local and informal types of participation (eg., raving, clubbing) in order to “gain a sense of sovereignty over one's own existence; if only at a temporary or local level” (Riley et al., 2010, p. 347).

What the above areas of research have in common is that they often focus on young people's lives as the primary sites for alternative forms of political engagement. Although not without their inadequacies, these theories are less frequently framed within the context of adult citizenship and are often dismissed by conventional political sciences and certainly the popular media.

What is interesting is that the above section reviewing alternate views of the political was put in at a later stage of the writing. I didn't have that part at the beginning. My own understanding of the political is so entrenched in a conventional definition of political dis/engagement that my initial literature review did not go much further than that definition. I, myself, dismissed alternative forms of political engagement, despite having an awareness of them before the writing of this project.

Furthermore, it is significant that it wasn't research or reading that prompted me to add that part, but rather a *person* on my thesis committee suggesting that I do so. This illustrates that

the personal can indeed be extraordinarily political and yet so often I find that the personal is trivialized in my life. The political is not out there somewhere in the 'public' sphere, it appears in my everyday interactions.

And so, the remainder of this thesis will be dedicated to exploring the question, why are certain views of the political more dominant than others in my life? This question immediately spawns other questions that I will keep in mind in the writing of this thesis. Why have I heard of some definitions of the political and not heard of others? Why do I see certain depictions and not others? How has dominant discourse influenced my views of the political? How are certain views of the political hidden from me? Why am I influenced by certain views more than others? Why do I consistently ignore or forget certain views? What does my understanding of the political reflect about me? What do my understandings reflect about the culture in which I am situated?

2. Un/Identifying the Enemy

*"We don't know that! We've got to operate on what we DO know!"
Dawn of the Dead (Romero, 1978)*

A pathway that may lead to possible answers to the questions asked above might begin to appear when a framework of immanence is applied. The term 'immanence' refers to 'remaining or existing within' and opposes what we know as 'transcendence'. In other words, all that exists is in unity, there is nothing outside of everything. Derived from Baruch Spinoza's *Ethics* (2000), the theoretical framework of immanence postulates that all life, everything at its finest and most molecular level, is created of the same, one Substance (Spinoza, 2000, I, Prop. 14). The material conditions referred to in the work of Karl Marx correspond to Spinoza's Substance; whereas post-Marxist theorists, such as Antonio Negri, and Deleuze and Guattari, often refer to Substance as the plane of immanence.

Substance, or the plane of immanence, is composed of bodies that are differentiated from one another only by movement and intensity. The body, in Spinozist terms, does not exclusively refer to the human body. It refers to *all* bodies. In other words, not only is the human body a body, but so is an organ, a cell, a molecule, an atom, each part of the atom, and so on up to the indiscernible infinite (Spinoza, 2000, II, Postulates). Similarly, human bodies can come together and form multiplicities of people. And so it is with all other bodies, from simplest to most composite¹¹. In other words, the plane of immanence is an infinite assemblage as described earlier.

Within the theory of immanence, all bodies are on an equal plane and all bodies are equal in importance. Any difference in importance or value given to bodies' differing characteristics are

¹¹ To further clarify, a body need not be specifically part of the human body. We can have a body of water for example. This too, however, is a simplification. An ecosystem, for example, illustrates a more complex and composite body. It should also be noted that there is "a unity to the plane of nature, which applies equally to the inanimate and animate, the artificial and the natural" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 254).

seen as socially constructed. In immanent reality all bodies are basically ‘flattened’ onto the plane of immanence, with only their movements differing. In an immanent framework, it is the movements that are most important. The movement of the body, and the intensity of its movements is what gives a body its degree of power; its actual capacity to act, to affect and be affected (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). The capacity of affects or modes of the body (what it can do) can either be increased or decreased through interactions with other bodies (Spinoza, 2000, II, Postulates). In this sense, immanence focuses on the micropolitics in everyday life; the personal as political. Thus we see that power within the immanent framework goes far beyond the notions of individual empowerment found in late-stage capitalist societies, creating major implications for the way the political can be enacted within the daily lives of young people, and people in general¹².

Furthermore, immanence, in its all encompassing nature, provides a possible contextualization for my research questions, and may provide at least a partial explanation for why and how certain views of the political are hidden from myself as well as others. In his book *Insurgencies*, Antonio Negri (1999) talks about how the political is often inadequately theorized – which is both true and untrue, depending on what context we find our definition of the political in. In my life, thus far, it seems that Negri's statement is often true. Like other young people discussed in some of the studies reviewed earlier, my own understanding of the political seems to be narrowly confined to governmental politics. And even as my understanding of the political becomes more complex, feelings of guilt and inadequacy reveal that these new understandings do not erase or displace my view of politics as linked to government and citizenship. In hopes of gaining more understanding of this struggle in my life and hopefully illuminating any struggles

¹² In fact, immanence may point to a politics that goes beyond humanity, as *all* bodies are implicated in power. For the purposes of this thesis, however, I will mostly discuss a politics concerning human bodies.

the reader may be experiencing as well, I will explore and theorize my understanding of the political through the crisis of power that is revealed in the immanent framework.

Constituent power and constituted power both exist simultaneously in society. These two powers are always in crisis with each other because although they fundamentally contradict each other, they are often conflated with one another. Thinking back to the plane of immanence, or Spinoza's Substance, what Negri (1999) calls constituent power can be seen as the endless and unstoppable force of life itself that keeps movement flowing through the bodies along the plane. Constituent power is the power of pure existence – reality (Spinoza, 2000). Just as the plane of immanence can be seen as horizontal and infinite, so is the constituent force along it. Constituent power is a force that is always open, moving, producing, reproducing – it has no end nor beginning (Negri, 1999). Within the immanent framework, the constituent is seen as the political.

Constituted power is a force of closure; it is rigid and immovable. In particular, constituted power can be seen as a traditional, modernist view of power that is organized in a 'top-down' configuration, stacking and harnessing power into one place as opposed to allowing it to be infinite and free-moving. The constituted is, in other words, seen as the social.

The constituent is the driving force of revolutionary power and absolute democracy, whereas the constituted is most recognizable in the centralized power of the State. In *Insurgencies*, Negri (1999) traces the conflict that arises between constituent and constituted power throughout several revolutions. The central issue in the book is the crisis of constituent power that this conflict induces, the crisis being that each revolution possess within it the seeds of its own demise. In a cruel irony, the realization of each revolution is its end. In an attempt to secure the freedom of the constituent, freedom is constituted and thus terminated. Thus, Negri poses the question: how can we have a revolution that never ends? Or, in other words, what would it take for the constituent force to remain perpetually open and not close down into the

constituted?

Applying this crisis to my own struggle, the question becomes how might I construct an understanding of the political that can remain perpetually open and not close down into a narrow and constituted definition of the political? In other words, the point of this thesis is not to define and pinpoint the political, but rather to open it up. To do this, however, requires that the closures be explored. In other words, I need to explore the constituted, or dark assemblages of the political, which seem to hold such power over my understanding. In this sense, I will use this thesis as a tool-and-result, as my limitations (closures in my understanding of the political) may become my result as I explore them.

At a fundamental level, the crisis between constituent and constituted power boils down to the age old debate of liberty versus security, and how both are ultimately needed for the other to exist to its fullest. The plane of immanence is pure, free flowing liberty – constituent power. It exists and is propelled by the pure desire to simply exist. Within the plane of immanence, desire is what produces the constituent. The constituted, in contrast, cannot produce anything, but can only maintain what already has been produced by the constituent (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). The constituted is security and claims to protect life by containing it and caging it in (Negri, 1999). These two opposing notions of power often get conflated and confused with one another. In Marx's method of historical analysis, the material conditions always precede and shape the mode of production and thus the social (Marx & Engels, 1978). Here we see that Marx's method is deeply rooted in Spinoza's Substance, or the plane of immanence, as the plane is pure materiality. The plane of immanence, having no beginning or end, has always existed as the bodies on the plane include all forms of existence, whereas the constituted comes into existence through the social, along with the development of human consciousness (Marx & Engels, 1978). What is most significant to note here is that the constituted can only be born of the constituent,

meaning that the two opposing powers are intricately connected, making their conflation with one another almost impossible to avoid.

It is not that a perpetually open understanding of the political has no closings, but rather a perpetually open understanding of the political has no *permanent* closings. Closings are unavoidable; and so, exploring the closures of the political in my life should inevitably lead to exploring the openings, as the openings can be found beneath the surface of those very closings.

The crisis of power, however, does not make this an easy task. Conflation and confusion make the openings and closings look the same, and sometimes they even are the same! Under such circumstances an enemy becomes difficult to identify, if not impossible.

Amidst the chaos and mayhem that we find in a zombie movie, there is an even deeper and more troubling confusion bubbling underneath. Who are the zombies? They? Or Us? They are us? We are them? Who's who?

ANA (20's) staggers forward. She hears:

KENNETH

Back up.

ANA turns to see KENNETH ROBESON (30's), a black man in a police uniform, aiming a Bennelli 12 gauge shot gun at her. ANA raises her arms, starting to break down.

KENNETH

Say something!

ANA

(begging for her life, but can only say:)

Please.

He considers this, and decides she passed the test. He lowers the gun, turns around, leaving her on the ground, and without a word, he walks away from her, into the woods. ANA gets up, following him, not calling after him, just following him, twenty feet behind. She might be able to catch up, but she keeps this distance. He's a cop. You have to follow a cop.

Suddenly, bullets explode around them. KENNETH turns, aiming his shot gun at RANDALL BRYANT (20's), holding a 9mm pistol, steps out of the forest, followed by two others. KENNETH has his gun pointed back at him. A brief stand-off. One of the others with RANDALL, MICHAEL SHAUNESY (40's) steps forward.

MICHAEL

Alright, okay. Put the guns down. (To RANDALL) What are you doing? Come on. He's a cop. Put your gun down.

RANDALL lowers his gun. KENNETH doesn't.

RANDALL

(to KENNETH)

I thought you were one of them.

KENNETH

No.

He lowers his gun.
(Gunn, 2003)

Much like in the crisis of power where both powers get conflated and confused with each other, distinguishing the zombies from the people becomes difficult because zombies are people. Well... reanimated dead people, but the human resemblance remains strong. One minute your loved one is human, the next they are trying to eat you. If you can't trust those closest to you, who can you trust? When the zombie apocalypse hits, the rough looking stranger that you wouldn't dare talk to on a normal day might be your best chance of survival. In this situation, a binary "us" versus "them" mentality can cost you your life, and often does, as this binary is simultaneously being reinforced.

The precarious issue of trust in zombie movies illuminates the importance of how context is crucial in order to have adequate knowledge. Without proper context we can only have a very inadequate idea of the causes of things. Spinoza (2000) argues that we confuse and don't understand the causes of things. When we don't understand the proper causes of things, we

attribute causes that are inaccurate – or as Spinoza calls it – causes based on inadequate ideas. If you don't know that there is a zombie epidemic happening, when your loved one is attacked you are going to run to them to see if they are okay, and will likely join them as part of the undead very soon. If you do know what is happening, you know that your loved one has been infected and is gone and that what remains of them needs to be destroyed.

The crisis of power can be framed as an issue of inadequate contextualization and knowledge. For some reason I seem to trust a narrow and binary definition of the political. Even though I don't think it's fair or agree with it, I still feel like there are things that I “should” be doing, and other things that I feel are frivolous and a waste of time – things that make me feel that I am apathetic and unengaged politically. I obviously am missing some information here... but if information is unavailable you are limited to operating on what you do know.

If an “us” vs “them” binary is all I've ever known, it's difficult not to organize everything I know into binaries. Even when something doesn't fit, I want to make it fit. We see characters in zombie movie who want to make it fit, when humans who are not zombies are mistakenly killed. For example, in *Night of the Living Dead* (Romero, 1968) at the end of the movie the protagonist, Ben, is assumed to be a zombie and shot without hesitation. Within the confusion and crisis of the non-binary relationship between humans and zombies the Other is blurred, and yet simultaneously intensified.

Am I one of them?

I have a homepage when I log onto the internet on which I have a news reel set up and sometimes I'll skim through it. Sometimes. Sometimes I'll even click on an article and read it. And sometimes it'll even be an article about some issue of importance – like what Obama's up to or progress on the oil spill. But most of the time when I skim through the news reel the articles I click on are about celebrity news.

When it comes down to it, I'd rather read about Lindsay Lohan's latest stint in rehab instead of wars on the other side of the world. I'd take Entertainment Tonight over regular news any day.

Why?

I mean I don't really care that much about what Lindsay Lohan is up to. She's just some rich, spoiled brat. Generally, I think that conflicts around the world are way more important. But not important enough to be informed about them...

I think what it comes down to is that I feel absolutely helpless when watching the news. For one thing, the news is biased. That's not to say there's no truth in it, but which truth should I trust? And even if the news was completely "true" and reliable, there's so many issues. Too many issues. How can you justify picking one over the other? What good is any of this information if I don't feel like there's anything I can do about it? Watching the news makes me feel powerless. I definitely do not feel political in anyway. I feel confused and helpless. And am reminded of how insignificant I am and how little I really know anything about anything. It's so boring and complicated. And it always feels like to understand one little thing, I need to understand the history of EVERYTHING in order to have an intelligent and critical opinion. This is just too much work. Work that I just don't care enough about. Watching the news reminds me that the zombie apocalypse is here all around – but I'm not a good guy like in the movies... I'm one of the zombies.

And so as a zombie, I'd rather not think about how I'm not contributing towards humanity. I'll change the channel and gorge myself on the flesh and beauty of the celebrities. I will join the hordes and although remain insignificant, at least here I don't need to be informed. My own opinion is good enough when it comes to hating on and devouring the rich and famous. I feel at ease consuming celebrity news.

Sometimes I am a zombie and all I can do is eat to feed my hunger, because I just don't know what else to do. It's either eat, or do nothing.

It's interesting that in the previous chapter I talked about how I wanted to contribute and be more informed, but here it seems that sometimes it's just easier to give up, and give into apathy. To me, the news seems to point to a sense of adulthood. It is important to be aware of what's going on in the world, but I feel there's more to it than that. In this sort of awareness lies responsibility. Celebrity news, in contrast, implies to me very little awareness or responsibility. So am I trying to evade a sense of responsibility? Or is it that I simply don't know how – or cannot – take on any responsibility? Does the news really offer a tangible sense of responsibility? Is it really that different from celebrity news, if I cannot identify what is

true/accurate and warrants my action and responsibility? Is the news really a way to become the good guy, or is it just another type of zombie?

Different zombie movies portray different types of zombies. In the most recent *Dawn of the Dead* (Snyder, 2004) we see zombies who consume violently – fast zombies, overcome with a hungry rage. The original *Dawn of the Dead* (Romero, 1978) explicitly points to the over-consumption of America by setting the action in a mall. The movie *28 Days Later* (Boyle, 2002) also depicts fast zombies, infected by a virus called 'rage'.

We also see zombies as slow and brain-dead. In *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), the first *Dawn of the Dead* (Romero, 1978), and *Shaun of the Dead* (Wright, 2004) to name a few, the zombies mostly remain in a dumb sort of trance and if there's no flesh to feed on they just wobble around staring off into space not doing much at all. In fact, in *Shaun of the Dead*, the zombies aren't always even that consumed with consuming: at one point we see the characters sneak by the zombies by pretending to be zombies – and it works. They are utterly stupid and unaware.

In the end, does my idea of adult responsibility really align with the good guys of the zombie apocalypse? Are there actually any good guys? Or are these just zombies in disguise? Within the crisis of power and its identification, we might also be able to locate a similar crisis in emerging adulthood. If I'm not an adolescent, but neither an adult, what am I? This lack of clarity frustrates me!

My positioning as an emerging adult, doesn't seem to offer me any clarity or comfort. Arnett's theory of emerging adulthood has been criticized for at times offering too benign an interpretation of young people's delay of the transition to adulthood (Bynner, 2005; Côté & Bynner, 2008). Arnett (2000) argues that emerging adulthood offers a stage of life with more choices and possibilities than ever, since adult commitments are postponed. Côté and Allahar (2006) argue, however, that options for many young people have actually decreased while the

illusion of possibility and choice has increased. On the one hand, economic conditions in late-stage capitalist countries have left young people 'floundering', a term used to describe going from one job to another, without progression (Côté & Bynner, 2008). In Canada, for instance, the proportion of young people to older people has decreased, putting youth into competition with older workers for jobs that pay a living wage. Furthermore, older workers are now encouraged to stay in the workforce as the lengthening of the life-span has led to the relinquishing of mandatory retirement ages. Young people are now stalled in less stable jobs, as the more stable workforce is taking longer to replenish itself¹³. The average income of a single young person in her 20s is in between \$12,000 and \$18,000 per annum, which is midway between rural and urban poverty lines (Côté & Bynner, 2008). Due to the lack of opportunity in the job market, "it is plausible to argue that many youth have had little choice but to seek post-secondary educational credentials in hope of gaining an advantage in access to better paying jobs" (Côté & Bynner, 2008, p.260). On the other hand, typical social markers of adulthood (e.g., leaving the parental home, financial independence, marriage, parenthood) have been eroding with such social norms diminishing. In this sense it appears that young people have more possibilities in defining adulthood on their own terms. However, it seems likely that young people are not taking on adult responsibilities out of necessity, not choice, hence the use of Côté's term, 'arrested adulthood'. If I am indeed experiencing 'arrested adulthood' is a zombie all that I can ever be? It certainly seems that way. Maybe the only question left now is which kind of zombie am I?

It would seem appropriate, writing an autoethnography, for the writer to position herself more concretely early on in the writing. Thus far, I have positioned myself loosely as an emerging adult, and in some ways as an apathetic zombie... but who am I exactly? Where am I from? What

¹³ For a more thorough and complex explanation of the precarious position of young people in the economy please refer to Côté and Bynner (2008) and/or Côté and Allahar (2006).

is it exactly that brought me to this position in relation to the political, and to the questions I am asking? These questions I will address to some degree later¹⁴. Truth be told, I don't really know how I got here.

I feel like I am stumbling along like a zombie who is void of most prior identifications. I don't know what kind of zombie I am, or what kind of human I was before. I will certainly drop clues here and there, I cannot help it, my history in many ways still drives me, just as zombies seem to retain certain human reflexes¹⁵. But at this time, I propose we meet much like characters do in the midst of the zombie apocalypse. Unidentified.

Unidentification is certainly problematic, as this chapter has revealed. There is a desire for clear cut definitions and positionings; without which may lead to confusion and fear. This confusion and fear, however, is a part of reality that is unavoidable. Instead of grasping for answers that may not be available at the time, perhaps it is more useful to look at what we *do* when certainty is not an option.

Doing Nothing

I've recently decided to do nothing.

There's just nothing that I want to do. And I keep thinking that this is very bad. There's all these things around me in my life that I could get more involved in. But I just don't feel like it.

There's church. Meh. Not feeling it. Or Food Not Bombs – I've been meaning to get involved in that, but just never could bring myself to go. There's campus ministries. Didn't feel like going to that either. Normally, I volunteer somewhere. Maybe I should go back and volunteer at the art gallery – that was fun... Nah. Maybe I could volunteer at some new place. Something different, something I haven't done before. But I really don't feel like it. There's nothing I can think of that I want to do. Is there nothing that will please me!?

¹⁴ I will begin to address these questions in Chapter 9: The escape.

¹⁵ Often zombies seem to retain some basic human reflexes – we can see them sometimes throwing things or opening doors, and mimicking other actions from their former existence. In *Dawn of the Dead* (Romero, 1978) it is pointed out that the zombies were drawn to the mall because of a subconscious memory; “they somehow know they were once happy in such a place” (Bishop, 2010, p. 237).

No, there isn't.

And then I thought – maybe I'm thinking about this all wrong. Maybe I should just go with this whole "I don't feel like doing anything" vibe and just, well, do nothing. Maybe I don't feel like doing anything for a reason. Maybe I need to do nothing.

And by doing nothing, I don't mean literally doing nothing at all. I'll work on school and my thesis and all the responsibilities that come with that – but other than that – I want to do nothing. And by nothing, I mean I don't want join any clubs, I don't want to volunteer, I don't want to commit to any sort of planned organized activity.

So really, I don't mean I want to do nothing. If friends call me, I'll have time to see them. If things come up that I want to do, I'll do them. But I will not consciously pursue any extra-curriculars.

Oh no! But what will I put on my CV???

Nothing.

That's right, I've decided to do nothing. How's that for a zombie?

And, yet, here I am – a zombie – writing about the political.

3. The Search

Interestingly enough, my frustrations with not knowing what the political is seems to have led me to an opening within the crisis of power. So while I have seemingly given up on an adult citizenship focused version of the political and decided to do “nothing” and interpreted this as apathy, it may in fact be the opposite. I am not actually doing nothing. Just nothing that I don't want to sincerely do – mainly, organized activities. Among the things left in my life that I do want to do are my thesis and my relationships, leaving me open to quite a large amount of collisions with bodies. Furthermore, there are no major expectations or limitations to these encounters (“if things come up that I want to do, I'll do them.”), perhaps opening up the space for expansive political experiences. In a way, perhaps Arnett's positive interpretation of emerging adulthood has some validity: a space for exploration can open up without the constraints of adulthood. This space may also be wrought with closings within it; nevertheless, the possibility for expansive openings lays here.

In *Insurgencies*, Negri (1999) examines several conceptions of constituent power in order to draw out its most significant features. An important feature of the constituent as was discussed briefly in the previous chapter is its perpetual openings. The absolute openings of constituent power are most clearly defined in the work of Foucault (Foucault, 1978; Negri, 1999). Whereas a traditional, modernist view of power can be seen as rigid and ‘top-down’ (i.e., representative, and always ending in a constituted form), Foucault's view is that power is a force that is fluid and horizontal. Power is available to all bodies because it is not something to be possessed but a force to be used. This force is localized and at work at all times in all places (Foucault, 1978). Thus, constituent power is decentralized and infinitely productive. In other words, even closings can be productive.

And so unbeknownst to myself, ironically, my narrow and constituted understanding of

the political made me flee from it, into the unknown of the constituent. Here, we see the movement of the constituent dismantling the closed assemblage of the political in my life, finding an opening in what seems to be a closing (doing nothing). Although at times my understanding of the political is captured by the constituted, it is somehow revived and brought back to life. The constituent always finds a way.

Another feature of constituent power that Negri elaborates is its function as 'counterpower'. Foucault's conceptualization of resistance is useful here. Unlike in a traditional monarchical view of power, resistance is not a reaction to lack of power, but an equally powerful exertion of force that always accompanies the exertion of dominating force, or power (Foucault, 1978). However, where Negri's 'counterpower' diverges from Foucault's conception of resistance is that the constituent as counterpower does not come with constituted, or dominating, power simultaneously, but rather *before* it (Skott-Myhre, 2008). In other words, constituent power produces enough force that even when the dominating force of the constituted tries to harness it there is still constituent force left over. Constituted power will harness some of the constituent, but in the meantime the constituent has already produced more, creating a surplus that amounts to what can be seen as resistance. Foucault's resistance can thus be seen as the residue and continuation of constituent force that was already there in the beginning. Here we see, as argued by Negri (1999)¹⁶, that the constituent always comes *before* not after the oppressive power of the constituted; so counterpower is always seen as undominated power, or as the 'creative life force' (Skott-Myhre, 2008).

Viewing the constituent as counterpower opens up new possibilities for the constituent and the crisis of its movement. Such a conceptualization reveals that the constituent never actually does terminate itself, but rather becomes only latent in a particular time and space, and is

¹⁶ See also Deleuze & Guattari (1987), Negri & Hardt (2004), and Skott-Myhre (2008).

already moving instead towards a different opening within time and space to express itself (Negri, 1999).

In *Night of the Living Dead* (Romero, 1968), Barbara and her brother Johnny have driven up 5 hours out of town to visit their father's grave. The radio isn't working properly and just as it comes back, Johnny turns it off, missing the news bulletin about the crisis that is ensuing. As the scene progresses the two are attacked by a man in the graveyard. Johnny tries to fight the man off, but eventually is overpowered. The man turns his attention to Barbara; she flees. Stumbling, Barbara throws her shoes off and continues running towards the car and locks herself in. But Johnny has the keys. The man clumsily runs towards the car and starts grabbing at the window. Eventually he picks up a brick and hits the back window with it, breaking the glass. Now at a whole new level of terror, Barbara releases the emergency break and the car drifts down the hill. The man is still running behind the car. With her attention divided between the man and the road, Barbara loses control and the car hits a tree. The man is catching up. Barbara gets out of the car and runs into the forest. She does not know where she is going. She is just running away. As Barbara continues running she sees a farm house in the distance. She runs towards it.

Barbara, like the characters at the beginning of most zombie movies, doesn't know exactly where she's going, but she keeps moving; searching for something, anything that holds the possibility of life.

Sometimes I forget what this thesis is even about, but I keep on writing and I keep on living. I am always moving. I don't know what to do, but I keep moving. Something will come up, something will have to come up. I don't know where I'm going or what I'm trying to find.

But when I find it I'll know.

Within the plane of immanence, desire is what produces the constituent (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). According to Spinoza (2000), every body desires to persist in its being to the

utmost degree; in other words, to have unrestricted movement, to act according to its nature.

Spinoza terms this desire to persist as *conatus*. But this is never seen as an individual desire, but a collective one. Desire determines each body's capacities, which can only be discovered in collision with other bodies (Spinoza, 2000).

In a slightly different articulation, Marx outlines three necessary premises of human existence which can be seen as different – yet intertwined – aspects of desire: basic survival, labour and relationships (Marx & Engels, 1978). We can see how this view of desire corresponds to Spinoza and his concept of *conatus*. A body desires to persist in its being to the utmost degree, thus to persist it must first and foremost live – survive. Then, it must act, do, produce: labour. And what the body can do can only be found out in collision with other bodies: relationships. From these material conditions arises consciousness (Marx & Engels, 1978). Or as Spinoza (2000) declares, “the human mind is the idea of the human body” (II, Prop. 19, Demo.). Mind and body are parallel on the plane of immanence, with the body always preceding the mind (not in importance, however). Thus, desire originates in the body, with the mind always interpreting the body and its desire, sometimes accurately, and other times falsely (Spinoza, 2000, II). The mind, when interpreting the body accurately, can lead to the fulfilment, or enactment of desire.

There is some sort of desire in me searching for an understanding of the political. Despite obstacles and moments of discouragement I continue writing this thesis. Although the writing of this thesis is a conscious act, my body seems to always be way ahead of me, and so this search was happening even before I started writing about it. Even before I started writing this thesis I was feeling restless. I started doing nothing before I wrote about it, before I even realized that it was to be a huge turning point in this thesis. Although I may not articulate it or frame it as a search for the political, every time my body seeks and is met with a collision a political moment has occurred. Not every moment might be an opening, but each moment, whether it be a closing

or an opening, alerts me to my desires, pointing and redirecting me in new directions.

Following my desire to “do nothing” has not led me to nothing, however; anything but. It has been a rich and productive time. My desire was not to do nothing; rather my desire was to not take part in what to me feel like constituted and closed assemblages. “Doing nothing” has opened up the space for constituent desire to flow freely without a direction in mind, leaving it more open to be fulfilled. The unknown allows for infinite possibilities. Emerging adulthood may be part of opening up such a space. This time can be looked at as a “moratorium” of identity that provides an opportunity for self-discovery. Some young people take advantage of this period of ‘arrested adulthood’ and “experiment with roles, ideas, beliefs and lifestyles; this experimentation can set the individual on a life course that is rich and rewarding”¹⁷ (Côté & Allahar, 2006, p. 64). Or in my case exploring my understanding of the political.¹⁸

Constituent power is always expanding. As was discussed earlier, within the plane of immanence, the movement of the body, and the intensity of its movements is what gives a body its degree of power, its actual *capacity* to act, to affect and be affected (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). The capacity of affects or modes of the body (what it can do) can either be increased or decreased through interactions with other bodies (Spinoza, 2000, II, Postulates). It is the greatest expansion of these capacities which the constituent force is made up of: all bodies functioning to their highest capacities in order to perform and create life.

A constituted assemblage decreases the amount of movements and intensities possible for a body and thus the amount of interactions with other bodies, decreasing power. It is interesting that I framed myself in negative terms as “doing nothing.” When what I really set out to do is

¹⁷ From a sociological perspective, this might be viewed as “developmental individualization”. This refers to one taking advantage of the normlessness of post-modern society and developing one's own life course through continual and deliberate growth (Schwartz, Côté & Arnett, 2005).

¹⁸ For many, however, this time can lead to confusion, destruction and/or disengagement. This idea will be explored further in chapters 4 and 9.

decrease the organization of my time and body, escaping a constituted assemblage into a more freely moving constituent assemblage. I have left myself open to the unknown; I have put myself into the position of zombie apocalypse survivor – I have no plan, I'm just going to search for the next thing. What thing? I don't know. Something. The search is the political. The search can be scary and unpredictable, but also exciting when one happens to collide with other bodies with common desires.

Although a zombie movie may start with a single protagonist, often he or she finds others to join them on the journey, others who are on the same journey into the unknown. There is safety, or at least some comfort, in numbers. In a cooperative moment, we see characters each using their strengths to expand the survival of the whole group, not just individuals because it quickly becomes apparent that individual survival is meaningless if there's nothing or no one else left in the world. This moment of cooperation gives us a glimpse into the meaning of the multitude (Negri, 1999; Negri & Hardt, 2004).

The multitude is an assemblage of time and space in which each body within it is reaching its highest capacity, in other words, an alignment of constituent desires all working towards the common purpose of expressing themselves. The multitude is, in fact, the realization of Spinoza's *conatus*, or Marx's fundamental human needs, or desires on a fully collective scale.

Within the multitude each body does indeed persist in its being to the utmost degree; living and thriving; acting, doing, producing; and constantly discovering what it can do in collision with other bodies. Further, the consciousness of the multitude is founded on adequate ideas, as with each collision of bodies the common desires are consciously sought and discovered, while retaining their idiosyncratic affects and abilities. It is in the multitude that new, hidden spaces of political engagement can be found as the desires of each body are simultaneously fulfilled (Spinoza, 2000; Negri, 1999; Skott-Myhre, 2008).

The fulfilment of the body's desire is pleasure or joy (Casarino, 2003; Bignall, 2010).

Such a fulfilment is what is called a constitutive force (Negri, 1999). The constitutive is a force in between the constituent and the constituted. It is constituent to the degree that it arises from constituent desire, but constituted in the sense that it is a moment that has happened and cannot be changed. Like the constituted, the constitutive is rigid and unchangeable; however, it is based on pure reality (as opposed to being based on transcendence). In the moment of its happening, which is always *now*, it is aligned with the constituent force.

My Feelings

My feelings are what link the political and social together. My feelings are the center – they are the middle of the collision between my perception (my body) and my environment (all the other bodies). They are always there in the moment of that collision telling me if it was a positive collision or a negative collision. My feelings tell me if desire has been fulfilled because desire is always there.

The problem is – and Spinoza addresses this – is that we often grossly misinterpret the causes of these feelings. Our interpretations are inadequate because we often only look at a few single bodies (individualism) and don't contextualize them within the infinity of other bodies that have also impacted them. Furthermore, we are basically taught to misinterpret our feelings (we are taught to 'manage' them). Feelings are the thing that are taboo in our society – they are 'private' and inappropriate.

Our feelings are all we have in every moment. Feelings are our only reality, our only truth. But we are alienated from them. Feelings are monstrous – we are afraid of them. They are monstrous – they are overwhelming because they are the most powerful thing we have – and they are the only thing that we really 'have' in any moment.

Desire can be seen as the vehicle driving us across a vast and intricate territory. Feelings are our compass, pointing us in new directions, while joy is how we recognize our destination. However, this destination is not marked on the road map, it is only ever discovered when one has arrived there.

The search for joy, or pleasure, however, can also be paralleled with, and mistaken for, the

zombie's clumsy search for flesh. Zombies can be seen as the mutation of the constituent. But where does this mutation come from?

In many zombie movies the causes of the outbreak are not revealed. When the causes are revealed, however, often the zombies, although it is unclear how exactly, are a result of human error. An accidental (or sometimes even intentional) release of a super-virus or a military bio-weapon or a mutated strand of an already existing virus. There is a theme of science gone wrong, human's desire for security so great that they ironically lose all control. This is alluded to in several zombie movies, but exemplified in *Resident Evil* (Anderson, 2002). In this movie, the plotline is set in a top-secret genetics research facility that has a security system which is solely run on artificial intelligence. If the system detects an infection, it seals the facility trapping everyone inside. Because the security system is run by artificial intelligence, not by humans, the survivors cannot escape as they cannot control the system, and must find a way to beat it. Like in this movie, it is often implied that if you play God, all hell will break loose.

4. The Quarantine

“When there's no more room in hell, the dead will walk the earth.”
Dawn of the Dead (Romero, 1978)

In zombie movies, there is often the idea that humans have gone too far with trying to control life. In some movies, the return of a dead points to the judgement of God – like in *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), where we see a televangelists announce that this is the price of excessive sin: there's no more room in hell. In many movies, however, the mutation that occurs is not always attributed to all of humanity's greed for control, but rather a specific population of people. We see animosity towards “experts”, scientists and doctors, and we also see the finger pointed at the state, capitalists and corporations¹⁹.

The crisis between constituent and constituted power plays out constantly throughout history. However, this crisis becomes intensified with the advent of capital as capital exploits both powers to the utmost degree. Pierre Bourdieu (2001) suggests that capital and power are the same thing. However, to be more specific, I will argue here that capital creates an assemblage of powers, that is more focused on constituted power.

Capital is defined as a type of value that self-expands (Vieta, 2007). A general formula for capital is $M-C-M'$, where M stands for money or value, C denotes commodities and M' is *more* money or value, in other words, profit or surplus (Bottomore, 1991). From this formula, we can see how the value ‘self-expands’. Of course it is critical to note that the formula hides what precisely causes the expansion of value. It is C that expands to C' which therefore causes M' to expand, because within C we have the means of production and most importantly labour power, the only type of commodity that “creates more value in its use than its cost” (Vieta, 2007). Thus, in actuality, it is not that capital is ‘self-expanding’; rather it is always expanding at the hidden

¹⁹ See *Dawn of the Dead* (Romero, 1978), *28 Days Later* (Boyle, 2002), *Zombie Strippers* (2008), and especially *Resident Evil* (Anderson, 2002).

expense of someone or something else. In other words, it is always a process of exploitation. More specifically, we can see that capital is always exploiting the constituent force and that it is the constituent that gives capital all its value. In other words, the constituent force refers to the living labour of the proletariat; without this labour there can be no value. Capital, as the constituted, seeks to control and contain the power of the constituent in order to produce as much value as possible. This is always done through a series of separations (eg., division of labour, division of labour within labour [fordism], division of time, etc.) as something always needs to be decreased in order to increase something else (in the case of capital, to decrease cost, but increase value and therefore profit). Specifically, what capital does is separate the social from the political: the social relation of value is always separated from the labour that created it. In other words, capital separates the constituted from the constituent (Marx & Engels, 1978; Negri, 1999).

This inequality and exploitation is reflected in the assemblage that constituent and constituted form within capitalism. Capital is an assemblage of powers that are constantly separated and opposed to each other. The constituted becomes intensified within capital, however, because capital is not the measure of concrete surplus, but surplus *value* (Negri, 1996). And value is purely a social relation. And what capital does is separate the constituted from the constituent, and place it above the constituent. Because capital in its simplest definition is a value that expands, it exists only to fulfill this function. Its function is to create surplus value— not just enough — but more than enough, which is by its nature an infinite measure. The equation $M-C-M'$ continues $\dots C-M''-C-M'''$ ad infinitum. There is never a value at which the process of capital accumulation is meant to end. In a capitalist society, capital fulfilling its function becomes first and foremost important. Thus, we see the privileging of a social relation (the constituted) over the political (or constituent) force. The separation of the social and political in capital, allows for the alienation of bodies from their constituent desires and instead recruits these desires for capital by

turning desire into lack so that capital can perpetually keep exploiting and continue on to serve its function (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983).

When the social relation is placed above material conditions, it becomes transcendent and therefore abstracted. Only in the abstract can desire become lack. In other words, only in the abstract can you desire something you do not have (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). Only in the abstract is negation possible, because in reality, negation literally does not exist (Spinoza, 2000). When the abstract is placed above the concrete, ideals are formed. An ideal basically creates a quarantine for the constituent. In essence, the abstract ideal creates imaginary walls or limits for the possibilities of life, or the constituent. The focus on attaining an ideal means that other possibilities are ignored. When the ideal is not attained, a lack is created. Instead of examining *what happened instead* of the perceived ideal, the focus is on what did not happen: a negation, a lack, which only exists in our perceptions.

With constituent desire being twisted into a desire of lack, within capital, the constitutive too becomes mutated. With a desire of lack, pleasure is put into infinite deferral and the constitutive is never fully realized (Skott-Myhre, 2008). Pleasure, or the constitutive, becomes constituted within capital and restricted to the realm of consumption (Casarino, 2003). And so capital never actually delivers the living, constituent and constitutive pleasure it promises: the workings of capitalism suggest that it can, but it cannot. Instead it offers an empty placebo of pleasure, that only serves to renew desire as lack, and start the process anew. *Now* becomes a fleeting, empty moment with a new future pleasure to be attained as its focus (Casarino, 2003).

Because of the intensity of the opposition that the constituent and constituted are assembled in within capital, coupled with the infinite deferral of the constitutive, capitalism is fraught with explosive violence and mutations. Because the desire of constituent bodies is purely productive, its containment and repression within capital often leads to death (Negri & Hardt,

2004), both literally and figuratively. Either the constituent force explodes in on itself within its containment – destruction its only escape – or it succumbs to the rigid order and command of capital, denying its desires, figuratively killing its own life source off, ironically, in order to survive. Furthermore, within such an assemblage, what we see is the political engagement of the constituent become mutated as well. Openings, like closings, can become a site of mutation in capital. Emerging adulthood might be seen as such a space of potential mutation. As was discussed earlier, emerging adulthood can offer up a space of exploration of life alternatives, or identity moratorium. However, many people can get lost and confused in this moratorium (Côté & Allahar, 2006). On the one hand, there is little guidance in this space taking place within postmodern society. The lack of guiding structures can leave people without a way to give meaning to their potential choices, and can result in making uninformed, unrealistic and potentially destructive choices. Ideologies of free choice and individualism “can actually decrease their quality of life, and to some extent, diminish their life chances” (Côté & Allahar, 2006, p. 29). On the other hand, people can instead take the “path of least resistance” and rely on “default options” offered up by the corporate-driven consumer culture (Côté & Allahar, 2006)²⁰. Moreover, such a space of infinite choice can cover up the social inequality that still exists in society. At its most extreme, youth dissent can turn to violence and self destruction, or in its disengagement to apathy and consumption.

Within capital, under the reign of violence and death, the constituted always appears to have the upper hand. The coercive power of the constituted is always squeezing the constituent for its productive forces, because the constituted itself cannot produce. Ideally capital would want all of the constituent force dominated; however, because the constituted cannot produce on its

²⁰ In contrast to developmental individualization, this can be referred to as “default individualization” (Schwartz et al., 2005).

own this is never possible, as some constituent force needs to be left open in order to move forward and produce something new to be exploited and dominated all over again (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). In other words, the constituted force of capital creates a quarantine for the constituent force, however, openings are necessary for the further production of both powers.

The theme of containment is quite evident in most zombie movies. Either people want to barricade themselves somewhere and create a quarantine for themselves, or a quarantine for the zombies is created – or both. There is safety in containment – or as it is put in Andrew Currie's (2006) movie *Fido*, “a better life through containment”. Ultimately, most quarantines or containments fail in some way. Either a zombie escapes the containment it is in, or finds a way to break into the containment the humans have made. Or, as is most common, there is a zombie in the containment all along – someone who has been bitten or scratched by a zombie, who in a matter of time will become one too. A quarantine rarely provides the amount of safety that is desired, it merely buys time before danger has to be faced once again.

But time is better than nothing. What needs to be remembered is that the constituted originated in our constituent desires. Meaning that we desire the constituted.

But I NEED to know what it means!

Even though I understand that an open understanding of the political – one that keeps moving and shifting - is more in line with constituent understanding, I still want to KNOW what the political is! I keep writing this and thinking – I haven't really defined my main concept. I need and I want a clear cut definition. I want to close it and contain it! A closed definition is so much easier to deal with, it's easier to justify, it's... just easier!

And so a challenge for my understanding of the political is to not settle for any definition. I have to understand that I will never find one that is adequate. Because the moment I have found one, is the moment I have lost it.

But I still want a clear definition anyways!

Similarly, although I seemed to have settled for being a zombie (doing nothing) and have found a

sense of freedom and discovery in this, there is still a part of me that can't help but feel that I'm doing something wrong. I still want to be the good citizen, or hero, even as I denounce this as a space of closure. I still long for the security of adulthood – or at least the perceived security of it.

I'm gonna keep looking. Maybe I CAN find something. I WILL find something, damn it!

Even if momentary, the constituted provides a sense of comfort: we desire this comfort, we desire these closings. The closings themselves are not the problem. It is settling for and focusing on the closings that becomes the problem. Within capital, the closing is revered and so capitalism focuses on regulating everything to ensure the closing instead of the opening. The closing is placed above and overshadows the openings. The constituted itself is not the problem, rather the separation of it from the constituent and blind-sighted focus on the constituted is what intensifies the crisis within capital. The closing is fine. Even resting in the closing is fine. But staying in the closing is death.

In *Night of the Living Dead* (Romero, 1968), Barbara, after escaping from the man who chased her out of the graveyard finds shelter in an old abandoned farmhouse. She is later joined by a man, Ben, who was on the run from the “things” as well. Ben finds tools and wood throughout the farmhouse and barricades the windows and doors to keep the ever growing herd of things out of the house. It is suddenly revealed that there have been people in the house all along taking shelter in the cellar. Harry, a hot-headed middle-aged man, has been taking shelter in the cellar with his wife, Helen, and their daughter Karen, as well as with a young couple, Tom and Judy. Ben and Harry immediately butt heads and an argument ensues about what is the safest place to stay: the house, or the cellar.

HARRY

NOW I SUGGEST WE ALL GO BACK DOWNSTAIRS BEFORE ANY OF THESE THINGS FIND OUT WE'RE IN HERE.

BEN

THEY CAN'T GET IN HERE.

TOM
YOU GOT THE WHOLE PLACE BOARDED UP?

BEN
(His attitude softer toward Tom)
MOST OF IT. ALL BUT UPSTAIRS... IT'S WEAK IN PLACES, BUT IT
WON'T BE HARD TO FIX IT UP GOOD...

HARRY
YOU'RE INSANE.... THE CELLAR'S THE SAFEST PLACE IN THE HOUSE.

BEN
(Lashes out)
I'M TELLIN' YOU THEY CAN'T GET IN HERE!

HARRY
AND I'M TELLIN YOU... THOSE THINGS TURNED OVER OUR CAR. WE
WERE DAMNED LUCKY TO GET AWAY AT ALL. NOW YOU TELL ME THEY
CAN'T GET THROUGH A PILE OF WOOD.

TOM
HIS WIFE AND KID'S DOWNSTAIRS. THE KID'S PRETTY BADLY TORE
UP.

BEN
WELL, I THINK WE'RE BETTER OFF UP HERE.

TOM
(Glancing about at the barricades)
WE COULD STRENGTHEN ALL THESE UP, MR. TINSDALE.

BEN
MAN, WITH ALL US WORKIN' WE COULD FIX THIS UP SO NOTHIN' CAN
GET IN HERE... AND WE GOT FOOD... THE FIRE... AND WE GOT THE
RADIO.

HARRY
WE CAN BRING ALL THOSE THINGS DOWNSTAIRS WITH US. MAN,
YOU'RE CRAZY YOU GOT A MILLION WINDOWS UP HERE... ALL THESE
WINDOWS, YOU'RE GONNA MAKE STRONG ENOUGH TO KEEP THEM OUT?

BEN
THEM THINGS AIN'T GOT NO STRENGTH, MAN, I SMASHED THREE OF
'EM PUSHED ANOTHER ONE OUT THE DOOR.

HARRY

I'M TELLING YOU THEY TURNED OUR CAR ONTO IT'S ROOF.

BEN

OH, HELL, ANY GOOD FIVE MEN CAN DO THAT.

HARRY

THAT'S MY POINT! ...ONLY THERE'S NOT GOING TO BE FIVE...
THERE'S NOT GOING TO BE TEN... TWENTY... THIRTY... A HUNDRED.
MAYBE... YOU KNOW? ONCE THEY KNOW WE'RE IN HERE, THE PLACE'LL
BE CRAWLIN' WITH 'EM.

BEN

WELL, IF THERE'S THAT MANY, THEY'RE GONNA GET US WHEREVER
WE'RE AT.

HARRY

LOOK, IN THE CELLAR, THERE'S ONLY ONE DOOR, ALL RIGHT? ONLY
ONE. THAT'S THE ONLY PLACE WE HAVE TO PROTECT. AND TOM AND
I FIXED IT SO IT LOCKS AND BOARDS FROM THE INSIDE. BUT ALL
THESE DOORS AND WINDOWS... WHY, WE'D NEVER KNOW WHERE THEY
WERE GOING TO HIT US NEXT.

BEN

YOU GOT A POINT, MR. TINSDALE, BUT DOWN IN THE CELLAR
THERE'S NO PLACE TO RUN... I MEAN, IF THEY DO GET IN, THERE'S
NO BACK EXIT. WE'D BE DONE FOR.

This stops HARRY for an instant.

TOM

WE COULD GET OUT OF HERE IF WE HAD TO... AND WE CAN SEE WHAT'S
GOIN' ON OUTSIDE... DOWN THERE, THERE AIN'T ANY WINDOWS.. IF A
RESCUE PARTY DOES COME WE'D NEVER KNOW IT... WINDOWS...

HARRY

BUT THE CELLAR IS THE STRONGEST PLACE!

Here we see how the quarantine, whether it be the upstairs of the house or the cellar, can easily turn into a death trap of its own. The cellar, however, is a space of absolute closure. It may be the safest place for now, but as is pointed out it may not hold any hope for escape if the situation needed it. Not seeing beyond the quarantine can cause death. Decontextualizing the quarantine and forgetting that there is freedom beyond it creates a closure.

While the quarantine might provide temporary relief, not realizing that the quarantine is temporary safety, not searching for the opening while you have a chance may mean death. And so the closure of the constituted, when contextualized within its relationship with the constituent reveals a hope for life and freedom; movement.

But how can one know when one is stuck in a closure with no openings? Within the crisis of power the closures and openings are conflated, and within capital closures specifically tend to look more desirable than openings. This crisis can be seen in emerging adulthood and my desire for adult citizenship. If adulthood is what it means to be political – then this is a limiting and inadequate understanding of the political. It is a constituted closure. But I desire this closure and the constituent zombie self that I have recently discovered seems inadequate.

Our feelings should point the way in identifying between the openings and closures, but capital separates the social from the political. And so we are often alienated from ourselves and reality. My constituent zombie self that felt adequate for a while is now premised on lack, and I am quickly forgetting the joy that can be experienced in this space as I desire an abstract adulthood that does not seem to be available to me. Alienation becomes a key obstacle to telling the difference between the openings and closures.

5. The Stupid One From rationality to reason²¹

"If we dealt with this phenomenon properly without emotion – without emotion – it wouldn't have come to this." Dawn of the Dead (Romero, 1978)

In many zombie movies, especially the older ones, there is often a continuous talk about remaining calm and rational. But mostly what we hear, is just that, a lot of TALK about being rational. When it comes to people's actions, we are bombarded with irrational actions. In fact, a key device in zombie movies to create horror and suspense is depicting people as really stupid and ignorant of the reality around them.

This is a very common device in Romero's (1978) *Dawn of the Dead*. For instance there is a scene where the characters have stopped to refuel the helicopter they are using to flee the city. As they split off to find food and other resources, Roger is left on his own pumping fuel. The helicopter is still running, which means he can't hear anything. We see a zombie slowly inching towards him, but Roger is not paying attention, as if he's forgotten why he's fleeing in the first place. From afar, Fran has noticed the zombie coming towards Roger. She yells and moves around trying to get Roger's attention, but he still does not notice. We see several scenes like this in the movie, depicting similar ignorance in situations that are potentially dangerous given the circumstances.

As I review the above examples, I am struck with a question: are these examples of stupidity actually examples of irrationality, or, is it precisely *rationality* that these examples depict?

The form of rationality that underlies Western society can be rooted in the philosophy of Rene Descartes. In Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1901) he lays his foundation in

²¹ In this chapter, I will use 'rationality' to refer to the type of thought premised on the Descartes' mind-body split. I will use 'reason' to refer to Spinoza's conception of thought, which within it includes rationality, however, expands and goes beyond it in several ways.

the first two meditations. In the first meditation, Descartes rejects the senses because they have deceived him before and explains that “it is the part of prudence not to place absolute confidence in that by which we have even once been deceived” (I, 3, p. 10). In the second meditation entitled, “Of the nature of the human mind; and that it is more easily known than the body” Descartes states that “I believe that body, figure, extension, motion, and place are merely fictions of my mind” (II, 2, p. 14) and then places the onus of his existence onto his mind: “I am, I exist, is necessarily true each time it is expressed by me, or conceived in my mind” (II, 3, p. 14). Essentially, it is here where we find the birth of the mind-body split. The separation of the mind and body can also be seen as underlying Marxist alienation and the separation of the social from the political, or the constituted from the constituent.

In general, to be alienated means to be separated from something (Vieta, 2007). From a traditional Marxist perspective, alienation is used to describe the way labour is experienced within capitalism for the proletariat based on class conflict. The bourgeois own the means of production and the proletariat have no choice but to sell their labour in order to produce. Specifically, the majority of labour prior to late-stage capitalism was largely produced by the body. But not just any body – the disciplined body. With the rise of the industrial revolution many proletariat and peasants who were accustomed to working the land with their bodies were forced into the cities where factory workers were needed, their labour needed to drive the capitalist machine. Obedience, discipline and containment of the body become central for the factory worker, hence, alienating workers from their bodies. Under capitalist labour, workers are alienated from the products they produce, the processes of production, their humanness (or their humanity) and from other workers (Vieta, 2007). In other words, people are alienated from their constituent desires. Thus in capitalism we see the crisis between constituent and constituted power personified in the class struggle.

The class struggle that is theorized in traditional Marxism, however, takes the form of a dialectic. Although the aim of a dialectic is to render contradictions productive, the way that the traditional Marxist dialectic is often interpreted is premised on an unequal binary that creates lack, as it places one side of the binary above the other side. In other words, such a binary creates lines of separation that act as walls and thus closures of the constituent.²² This binary then creates further alienation much like the placement of the mind above the body alienates one from the reality around her/him. I will explain below how this sort of Marxist interpretation can in fact produce further alienation and may be an inadequate interpretation to apply within a late-stage capital context where the closures and openings do not form binaries, but are rather conflated with one another. This conflation makes rationality impractical in many cases, and sole adherence to it can alienate one from their immediate reality.

Might such an inadequacy of binarized views be reflected in the tension around stupidity in so many zombie movies; the tension alluding to the 'irrationality' of rationality? In the midst of a zombie apocalypse – where the seemingly impossible has occurred – rationality itself seems impossible. Rationality seems like a joke. All of a sudden it appears that being rational isn't going to save you. We see the consequences of rationality being an absurd alienation from reality. Without an awareness of our bodies within our immediate reality we cannot tell apart the closings from the openings; we cannot tell whether or not our constituent desires are being fulfilled.

Negri (1996) and others of a post-Marxist persuasion claim that since 1968 there has been a new shift in the means of production in the developed world. This shift also dictates a shift in the form that alienation takes in late-stage capital society, which can be seen as an alienation from reality itself.

²² It is in this sense that Negri (1999) speaks of how each revolution holds the seeds of its own demise. A dialectic can only ever create a revolution that terminates itself, replacing the old ruling class with a new one without actually altering the overarching power relations.

Factory manufacturing has given way to new technologies, displacing the mass worker (Negri, 1996; Deleuze, 1995; Negri & Hardt, 2004; Hardt, 1998). Industrial capitalism, the period of the mass worker, has shifted into the total subsumption of capital, in which the 'social worker' becomes hegemonic. The total subsumption of capital is the moment in which everything – material or immaterial – becomes for sale (Skott-Myhre, 2008). The total subsumption of capital is put into motion with the deregularization of capital, and the opening up of the market to the entire world: in other words, the globalization of capital. As Negri (1996) describes: "the models of regulation are extended along multinational lines, and the regulation passes through monetary dimensions which cover the world market to a continually greater extent" (p.156). Essentially, more space and time needs to be appropriated in order for late-stage capitalism to thrive.

Because the globalization of capital displaces the Western mass worker to periphery spaces in which labour is cheaper, hegemonic labour in the most highly developed capitalist countries shifts to a different focus. The organization of labour becomes progressively more decentralized spatially. It is instead focused on the expropriation of social knowledges, on the capitalization of the social labouring networks: in short, it concentrates on the exploitation of a working figure which extends well beyond the bounds of the factory. We call this figure the social²³ worker. (Negri, 1996, p. 163).

The social worker might be viewed as the new proletariat. The social worker's life is defined by abstraction and flexibility; everything is "short-term and rapidly shifting, but at the same time continuous and unbounded" (Deleuze, 1995, p. 181). Basically, capital in the Western world has moved beyond the exploitation of physical space, into the realm of immaterial time. Space can be quantitatively measured, and therefore is limited by its physical and constitutive nature. Time,

²³ It should be noted that the word 'social' here is being used not to represent the constituted, as was used previously. Here social is referring more simply to social interactions; the interactions between bodies.

however, which is socially produced is qualitative and therefore infinite, meaning capital can fulfill its function even more effectively by exploiting the abstract (Negri, 1996).

A brief discussion of Bourdieu's forms of capital might be useful here. Bourdieu (2001) outlines three forms capital: economic capital, cultural capital and social capital. Economic capital is essentially money, or property that can be immediately converted into money. Cultural capital occurs in three states: the embodied state, "in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body"; the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods; and the institutionalized state, largely in the form of educational qualifications (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 98). Finally, social capital refers to one's network of relationships, or group memberships (family, school, class, etc.) which create a resource pool of the different forms of capital for one's disposal. The different forms of capital are interrelated and can be at certain moments converted into one another²⁴ (Bourdieu, 2001).

I would argue that cultural capital can be roughly aligned with Negri's (1996) idea of 'social knowledges'²⁵ and social capital with 'social labouring networks' – together these forms of capital come to form what is called identity capital (Côté and Allahar, 2006). The accumulation of identity capital (i.e., both social and cultural capital) are highly reliant on the amount of *free* time one has at their disposal (Bourdieu, 2001). In other words, the time one has outside 'the factory', so to speak; outside of wage paying labour hours. The social worker's labour is highly concentrated on acquiring identity capital as a means of investment into *future economic capital*. The hope is that the forms of capital within identity capital will indeed pay off and convert into economic capital in the future.

²⁴ There is certainly more that could be said about Bourdieu's forms of capital and their conversion; however, with the limited scope of this thesis I hope this brief explanation will be enough to explicate the point at hand.

²⁵ Perhaps we might see this focus on social knowledges within the total subsumption manifesting itself in my desire to always be an informed citizen.

Here we might be able to begin to see how post-Marxist alienation takes on a deeper form in late-stage capitalism. If leisure time is now just as exploitable as labour time, we can start to see how the constituent (our creative productive forces) can be easily conflated with the constituted (production captured by capital). Furthermore, because social labour is concentrated on capital that only might become tangible (economic) in the future, we can see how one's productive identity might be placed in deferral, and therefore be perceived as lack. Because the affirmation of productivity (in capital's terms) is placed in the future, one can become alienated from their present constituent production; in essence, their immediate reality and the desires that are present in it.

Basically, the social worker's production revolves around the consumption of capital, instead of the creation of it. This consumption-as-production can be seen in a number of ways; attaining more and more seemingly arbitrary educational qualifications (and acquiring massive amounts of debt in the process) being a poignant example. If capital is relying on a mode of production in which leisure time consumption is the labour, the need for labour-time production decreases. This, as Casarino (2003) calls it, is the "impossible dream" of capital: production time reduced to zero time so that the utmost amount of profit is generated. The glaring problem here that renders this dream impossible is that without productive labour time we do not have the means to consume. And yet this is what appears to be happening in late-stage capitalism. In terms of traditional Marxist class divisions, what we now have is a small sector of people employed to produce ideas and identities for consumption (the upper class or 'old' bourgeois²⁶), and a large reserve of part-time or contract worker in the service industry, or otherwise 'floundering' workers (working class or 'old' proletariat) (Côté and Allahar, 2006). As long as identities are based on

²⁶ By 'old' preceding bourgeois (and later proletariat) – I mean to make the distinction that I am referring to a traditional Marxist understanding of the word, based on a traditional and dialectical Marxist class struggle.

lack consumption-as-production is sustainable to certain degree. However, with the division of labour the way it is currently assembled, sustainability of such an economy is clearly problematic. Although the old proletariat have the potential to eventually join the small upper class (or old bourgeois), with the disparity between the rich and the poor growing it seems more likely for the old proletariat to remain stuck for a relatively long time concentrating on social labour as their main means of consumption-as-production trying to accumulate as much identity capital as possible, all the while reducing their economic capital.

Here we might see the emerging adult as an intensification of the social worker²⁷. Many young people in Canada are under the assumption that higher education credentials are needed in order to compete in the job market; however, the number of highly skilled jobs available in comparison to the proportion of young people graduating with university degrees is rather low (Côté & Allahar, 2006). This disparate proportion is only likely to increase, as more and more young people graduate. On the other hand, the demand for low-skill service industry workers has increased, and many young people resort to taking on these lower-level jobs as it appears to be better than nothing. This disappointment in the failure to secure a high quality job, however, often leads young people to seek out further qualifications in order to gain an advantage. Inadvertently, this has led to credentials losing market value, which ironically seems to fuel the search for higher qualifications even more (Côté & Allahar, 2006). And so only in consumption-as-production does it seem that adulthood can be attained (eventually).

One obvious problem is that, while this longer preparation for work roles is fine for those with parents who can afford to pay for a postsecondary education, the bulk of the population cannot afford it and therefore face a continuing struggle in terms of their

²⁷ In fact, we could look at Arnett's theory as being one that fits a Marxist idea of historical tendency: Arnett (2007) argues that the more industrialized a society becomes the more widespread emerging adulthood becomes. The same might be said about the social worker in terms of its hegemony.

standard of living. (Côté & Allahar, 2006, p. 45)

Thus, many emerging adults are accumulating more and more financial debt, while simultaneously increasing identity capital that doesn't seem to be as lucrative an investment as was promised.

Although the emerging adult may be seen in some ways as an intensification of the new proletariat or social worker, social labour is certainly not confined to this stage of life. In fact, if labour is now associated and conflated with leisure time, as mentioned previously, this has some major implications for class struggle as a dialectic, or a binary made up of oppositions. The upper class itself has the most leisure time and economic capital at its disposal, thus implicating it within social labour as well. Although in terms of economic capital they can be perceived as the old bourgeois class in traditional Marxist terms, they are now taking on identity consumption-as-production along with the new proletariat class²⁸. Similarly, the old proletariat class, as based on economic capital, becomes complicated by this new social and economic order. Although the old proletariat may have less economic capital, the amount and type of identity capital can vary from person to person. This might be illustrated with an example of some emerging adults who make up the proletariat: one may have been raised with distinctively bourgeois cultural and social capital, but in facing the new economy, might find themselves financially deprived. Other such antagonisms might be found within the proletariat class²⁹. Overall, however, both the old bourgeois and old proletariat classes make up the new proletariat class. Moreover, the abstracted nature of social labour complicates the status of the new bourgeois. Although, we might have certain individuals or entities who might have a high amount of influence over the directions of

²⁸ Although most likely with greater ease and perhaps even more alienation than the proletariat class.

²⁹ As has been illustrated to some degree traditional class lines and other forms of social inequality still exist. Because capital is based upon a history of accumulation which was premised on inequality to begin with, barriers certainly exist, and are even intensified. However, just as the separation between humans and zombies are blurred, so too is the separation between class, gender, and race lines.

social labour (e.g., marketing companies or popular self-help gurus like Oprah), can anyone really 'own' someone else's social labour? The only ownership of social labour we might find is embodied in the social worker herself, making the new bourgeois and new proletariat one and the same.

The above illustrates to some degree why the binaries of the dialectic become problematic: the bourgeois and proletariat statuses are conflated within the total subsumption where social labour dominates. It is no longer as simple as the proletariat being exploited by the capitalist bourgeois other: the total subsumption of capital makes it possible for individuals to subjectively be both the proletariat, and the capitalist bourgeois in any given moment. In this sense, we might see how an *us vs. them* mentality alienates one even further from reality, because one is *both us and them*.

Within the total subsumption, because identity consumption-as-production within leisure time allows everyone to be a part of it, literally every moment can be for capital. Every interaction with any body might be used towards capital, for the sake of a future profit. Because our desires have been mutated into lack, our very identities are premised on lack, thus our collisions with other bodies are not for the sake of producing ourselves, but are often in order to consume each other. Because pleasure based on consumption within capitalism is in infinite deferral, the constituent and constitutive get left behind. Thus we are often alienated from our bodies and other bodies in the living moment of *now*. Because we are so hyper focused on the constituted social, we become suspicious of our bodies and constituent desires. Reality becomes an intrusion that must be harnessed.

I am alienated from my own reality

I often dismiss the experiences of my body. In particular I tend to really dismiss the experiences

of my body that do not serve capital and rationality. Earlier when I said I was going to do nothing is fairly indicative of this alienation.

It seems that what I understand in language is different from what I do in my body. Doing nothing is simply not possible, but the word 'nothing' hides this from me. I often forget my actual experiences, and instead code them with a language of lack. Thus far I have even positioned myself into identities based on lack: I have seen myself as a zombie, instead of a human and found the lack of arrested adulthood more relatable than the possibilities of emerging adulthood. And based on my feelings I would say I trust these interpretations of events more than the events themselves. I sort and organize events into binaries – productive and unproductive, even though upon further speculation my categories don't really make that much sense.

But this lack often comes after the fact, not necessarily during many of my experiences. I'm not rationalizing my experiences in every moment. Being rational requires time – time to think about it.

In a zombie infested world there is no time. All of a sudden the world is this context of chaos – you need to live in the moment in order to survive. But without awareness of the body, one can only have an extremely inadequate understanding of time (Spinoza, 2000, II, Prop. 31). The characters that do stupid stuff seem to be unaware of the present time they are in – they do not recontextualize their actions within the conditions that surround their bodies (ie, there are hungry zombies around looking to feast on flesh). In other words, they are alienated from reality. As an audience member, I often find these scenes excruciatingly frustrating to watch. I yell, scream and laugh at the scene unfolding. In some movies, these scenes become funny because the zombie moves so slowly that time seems to stretch out – you watch in horror and humor as the character runs out of (what seems like so much!) time that could be used to create a rational plan of defence. As the zombie inches closer chances of action based on rationality decrease.

I don't have time for that

Similarly, I find that I never have the time to get involved “politically” with things, because I often feel that I need to be informed in order to do something of value.

But do I really not have time? Well... I think the answer is yes and no. I don't have time for that particular activity: getting informed about governmental politics.

The reason I don't have time is because I am busy doing something else. When I truly look at how much I do in a day, there are tons of tiny things I do. I get distracted and end up watching a video on YouTube, I chat with someone on Facebook; I watch a talk on TED.com; I talk with a friend about why I don't want to vote.

I actually am being informed about several things in my day. Maybe the way that I'm getting informed is just not the way that is deemed rational, and hence not worthy to be a part of 'time'.

The way that characters do end up surviving, is not primarily thinking and planning, but by paying attention to all of their immediate surroundings, using whatever they can in order to stay alive. It is not rationality, but rather an undeniable physical awareness of immediate danger that initiates one into action. Within zombie culture, there is a common joke about using what you have to fight zombies: when you enter a room you find the best 'weapon' to kill a zombie with, maybe a broom, or the shower curtain pole. This idea has actually spawned a zombie video game called *Dead Rising* (Kawano & Inafune, 2006) in which the player can kill zombies with various weapons and everyday objects. This sentiment is also reflected in the movie *Zombieland* (Fleischer, 2009). The main character and narrator of the film tells us about his list of rules to surviving the zombie apocalypse, or Zombieland as he calls it. Most of these rules have a lot to do with being obsessively vigilant of your immediate surroundings.

Spinoza outlines three levels of reasoning: the first is 'imagination', the second is 'reason' and the third is 'intuitive knowledge'. "Knowledge of the second and third kind, and not of the first, teaches us to distinguish the true from false" (Spinoza, 2000, II, Prop. 42, p.149). Imagination, however, is "knowledge of the first kind [and] is the sole cause of falsity" (Spinoza, 2000, II, Prop. 41, p.149). Imagination here is the knowledge we perceive through the senses and through signs; in other words, language. Spinoza explains its inadequacy: "for example, from the fact that on hearing or reading certain words we recollect things and form of them certain ideas

which are similar to those through which we imagine things” (Spinoza, 2000, II, Prop. 40, Schol. 2, p.148). These ideas of things, however, are only ‘similar’ to the *recollection* of these things; not only are they not the same, but they are only compared to memories which allows for distortion, and thus falsity.

I would argue that rationality is encompassed solely within the realm of Spinoza's 'imagination'. Because rationality places the mind above the body, rationality is primarily based on the abstract use of signs which are recollected³⁰. Imagination and recollection are often flawed, and it is precisely these realms of the mind that encompass the past and future. Only with the consciousness of the past, can the future exist³¹. In other words, the mind's falsities can lead away from the constituent fulfilment of desire *now* and towards the constituted past and future that creates desire as lack.

This is not to say that the use of imagination, or rationality, is all bad. In line with the plane of immanence, Spinoza holds no actual hierarchy of knowledge. Although the types of knowledge hold different levels of importance to a certain degree, these knowledges are organized in a different way than a hierarchy. A hierarchy can be seen as organized in a linear formation, with each type of knowledge successively gaining importance (or viewed the other way around, losing importance). Spinoza's types of knowledges can be seen to be composed in an assemblage instead. Visually, I would propose this assemblage be viewed as circles overlapping each other: the smallest circle, imagination, is placed in the center; a larger circle placed over top is reason; finally, the largest circle, intuitive knowledge, is placed over top the first two circles, encompassing them both. All three types of knowledge are necessary and inform each other; even

³⁰ Although, Descartes condemns the senses, a part of Spinoza's 'imagination', what he deems as most important is basically the other half of imagination – the mind and its abstractions, leaving the rest of what Spinoza deems as reasoning untouched.

³¹ Spinoza explains that only the affirmative exists. Thus, the future is only re-compositions of things that already exist in some form in our experiences. For a fuller explanation please refer to (Spinoza, 2000, II, Prop. 49, Schol.)

imagination can inform reason. For example, we can imagine things or ideas that are false (we cannot help it) but through reason we can at least be aware of these falsities, which frees us from such errors. Imagination therefore is necessary in order for us to make sense of things and be able to communicate ideas. Imagination allows us to access reason and aids us in discriminating inadequate ideas from adequate ones³². It is imagination on its own, with no mediation from reason or intuition, that is erroneous and dangerous: the smallest, circle in the center of the assemblage of Spinoza's reason is inadequate on its own. Spinoza's assemblage of reason basically points to the use of the mind and body *together* as political. Combined together the types of knowledge do not exclude the body and its emotions and senses, as the Cartesian model of rationality does. The body is essential to engaging with the reality of now, whereas the mind must interpret reality and stay aware of its movements, collisions, and desires at all times in order to achieve the most adequate interpretation. The body must then act on the mind's interpretation, which sets in motion the process all over again³³.

In the zombie apocalypse, the characters who survive are essentially the ones who use the full assemblage of reason. In *Zombieland* (Fleischer, 2009), the protagonist's list of rules can be seen as such a use of both the mind and body. The rules themselves can be seen as a use of imagination and recollection; however, the rules are not rigid, but rather open to interpretation given what the actual circumstances are, and thus interpreted by reason and intuition.

Unfortunately, reason will not *always* save you; especially during a zombie apocalypse. You pretty much have one shot. And zombie movies don't really sugarcoat anything. Some characters will fail in that one shot. Despite their best efforts some do die. Reason does not guarantee survival – but neither does rationality.

³² An adequate idea is a true idea; an inadequate one is false (Spinoza, 2000). However, adequate and inadequate ideas for Spinoza lay within a continuum, instead of a binary much like the assemblage of reason.

³³ The section entitled “My Feelings” in chapter 3, might be useful here.

However tragic death may be, death may not always be a permanent and constituted closing. For an individual, it may be; however, it must be remembered that the constituent is never individual, but collective. It is decontextualizing the individual from the collective that renders the closing of death a permanent closing. Here we see that individualism constitutes yet another closing in the crisis of power, and thus an inadequate understanding of the political in immanent terms.

Chapter 6: The Independent One
From individualism to the complex self
"Fuck y'all." - Dawn of the Dead (2004)

In *Zombieland* (Fleischer, 2009) the characters refer to each other not by their own names, but rather by the places they are going to, as an act of depersonalization. One of the protagonists, as well as the narrator of the movie, Columbus, Ohio, attributes his survival to the fact that he is a loner.

COLUMBUS (narrating)

I may seem like an unlikely survivor with all my phobias and irritable bowel syndrome. But I had the advantage of never having any friends or close family... I've always been kind of a loner, I avoided other people like they were zombies, even before they were zombies.

During a zombie apocalypse it is pertinent to "cut all emotional ties" in order to survive (Fleischer, 2009). Because any one can become a zombie at any time you must not get too close to someone as you are most likely going to have to kill them sometime down the line. One of the underlying messages is that creating openings of vulnerability with others during a zombie apocalypse is seen as foolish.

Sometimes I can't stand being myself

My pursuit of relationships and intimacy can feel so alienating and embarrassing. I try to be myself (or more specifically, I try to reveal a bit of my vulnerable self) when I'm with people. And I often feel inadequate for it.

When I TA at school sometimes I know the words coming out of my mouth don't make sense and I sound stupid and confused. I don't speak perfectly, but that's the way I am. I could try to change this, but I purposely don't. I want to talk like a normal everyday person, not in some professional lingo that obscures my humanity. I want to relate to my students on a personal level. I think I do this.... yet I still often feel like an inadequate TA. Maybe they don't think I'm smart enough and make fun of that 'dumb blonde' TA behind my back. Although I strongly believe in opening up lines of communication in this way I often feel exhausted, embarrassed and like a failure on many levels. Am I actually accomplishing anything? Am I making a difference? Isn't this an example of being political?? If it is, why do I feel like crap so much of the time?

...But is it always about feeling good?

When I think about what it means to be political, sometimes the idea of 'empowerment' comes to mind. My understanding of the political often falls back into conflation with the civic: the good, loyal citizen, is also a happy citizen. The idea of being empowered, to me, has very positive connotations. Even more importantly though, is that empowerment is often conceptualized within an individual framework. I often conflate being "empowered" with feeling good about myself; an individual fulfilment of pleasure. Individual pleasure, however, becomes a problematic indicator of power. Pursuing empowerment can potentially lead to a harmful hedonism in which pleasure and power are not mutually shared with other bodies. As was discussed earlier, pleasure, or joy, is the fulfilment of constituent desire, and desire can only ever be discovered in collision with other bodies. So pleasure or joy – the fulfilment of conatus is always with other bodies. Or as Bignall (2010) phrases it: "properly conceived, joy is the basis for an ethical attitude of desire because it is necessarily mutual" (p. 17). Thus individual empowerment is a diminished form of power.

Rationality can mislead one into thinking that individualism is more powerful than a collectivity, or, in the case of characters in zombie movies, safer. With rationality alienating one from the reality outside of themselves, one begins to look inward and can begin to ignore not only their own body but the bodies of others. In this sense one might see themselves as solely political without the aid of other bodies they are in collision with. In this way characters rationalize being alone. Other times people do challenge this individualism by sticking with only certain people. Although this is an expansion of the individual, I would argue this is also individualism in a broader form, as a group of people can form an entity that can be opposed to another individual or group of people.

In fact, the prevailing discourse of independence is often intensified when we see people challenging it in the zombie genre. We often see characters forging tight bonds with their closest loved ones, but this usually ends disastrously. Very often there is someone within the group of survivors who gets infected, but this is usually not revealed to the whole group. Usually, there is a loved one who knows about the bite, but protects the infected individual. In Snyder's (2004) *Dawn of the Dead*, this situation is exemplified by the character, Randall, whose pregnant girlfriend gets bitten. Randall hides his girlfriend away as her infection becomes more visible. His love and protection are no use against the infection as we see that he has strapped her down to a bed to restrain her. What becomes apparent is that those who you can trust in one moment may not be trustworthy in the next moment. Because of this lack of reliability and stability in individuals, the struggle between self and other is intensified. Why trust anyone when even 'your own' can turn on you?

Both rigid trust and distrust between bodies, however, is often flawed within the immanent framework. As Bignall (2010) clarifies “while individuals are constituted by their relations with others, these are not simply one-on-one encounters between entire entities” (p.12). Although the above connection of bodies between Randall and his pregnant girlfriend challenge the discourse of independence, this interaction of bodies is still marked by individualism as it is an all or nothing interaction between 'entire entities'.

Such an individualistic conceptualization of bodies can make one apt to not trust at all. Yet this lack of trust, that is so often encouraged in dialogue, is often contradicted in zombie movies. Even some of the most individualistic characters often give into cooperation. It soon becomes evident that individualism creates a closing. Those who carry their individualism to the end often die a lonely death – even a seemingly insignificant death – sometimes it's humorous or as an audience member you feel like “Good, he deserved to die”. On the other hand, many

individualistic characters cannot help but eventually succumb to the force of the multitude.

It is often revealed that the strength of independence alluded to (talked about) in zombie movies is revealed to be a flawed perception of survival. As Spinoza points out, “The human body needs for its conservation very many other bodies” (2000, II, Post.4).

Survival lies in the many, not the one – surviving to be on your own often seems meaningless. As *Zombieland's* Columbus concludes at the end of the movie “Without other people, you might as well be a zombie”. But the question becomes, which bodies do you trust? Spinoza (2000) also reveals that some bodies are toxic to each other.

Trust and cooperation often come in unexpected places, ways and people. Your 'own' may not be the best to trust at 'all' times. Which bodies to trust is always shifting and changing, configuring in new ways. Bodies are not singular but complex. As Bignall (2010) describes, “complex bodies are thus affected not wholly or in entirety, but by a vast number of internal and external relations at any one time, which impact upon and transform them in partial and selective ways according to the nature of the elemental connections and disjunctions” (p.13).

The way to survive the crisis of trust in a zombie apocalypse is to flatten all bodies and ascriptions you have upon those bodies into a plane of immanence, and rely on only the information in front you – the reality that your immediate surroundings create for you. All assumptions must be put away, and bodies must be assessed as they are in any moment in relation to one's own body. Each body in each moment must be viewed for the unique possibilities it holds right now. Although history should not be forgotten, it should be looked at with suspicion. From the plane of immanence, the view is always one of an unanswered question – a question asked over and over again. The same question can have a different answer every time. A body may be an enemy in one moment, but a friend the next or vice versa. But no matter the answer, the question must be asked again, the relations between bodies constantly assessed and

reassessed.

Thus far this chapter has theorized the relations between bodies primarily within a zombie apocalypse. Similar relations between bodies are applicable, however, within the total subsumption of capital. Just as the 'infection' creates rifts between characters and their loved ones, so too does capital at this heightened stage.

As was discussed previously, within the total subsumption of capital, the social worker takes a hegemonic form. With schedules becoming more flexible and individualized, the organization of the social worker's time can create barriers between family, loved ones and friends. We are increasingly disconnected from the people we want to be with or feel we should be with. The organization of time within the total subsumption of capital can be compared to the infection within the zombie apocalypse. This organization of time can conflict with the individualistic discourses of family, belonging, and loyalty which are all very powerful in organizing the relation of our bodies to one another.

So much freedom, but no one to share it with

I often find it hard to find people who have "time" to be in relationships with me, because we all have our own individual schedules and when I get to see certain people is dictated by schedules which often conflict with my own. People don't really have 9-5 jobs anymore; my own school schedule is very sporadic.

On the one hand this is great. I have lots of free time, and can work and play whenever I want to – everything is on MY time. But my freedom, which on the outside seems wonderful and full of flexibility, remains in an individual realm and often becomes lonely. This time and flexibility can limit my interaction with others, because lots of other people have this same flexibility and have already planned something that they are going to do and so there is no mutual free time between us. It seems like I have infinite time for myself sometimes, and yet there is no time for others that I want to be with.

Sometimes I feel like I have so much freedom, but no one to share it with.

But at the same time the way that time is organized creates the opportunity for collision with other bodies. These bodies, however, may not fit our discourses of belonging. In fact, the bodies this organization of time offers us are often bodies that have invisible walls that separate us although we are physically together; ascriptions and expectations dictated by the language of our (collective) imaginations – in other words the intersectionality of identities which we judge as either better or worse than ourselves.

Just as in zombie movies characters are reluctant to trust others who are strangers to them, we also are reluctant to put trust in bodies that are ascribed as the 'other' to us. What ascribes the other, however, is language and expectations. This means that the ascriptions that I give to my own and other bodies come from my imagination. Without the aid of the other two levels of knowledge, my own imagination can reproduce and produce the other. That's why the people around me appear like potential zombies – it is actually my own zombification spreading, seemingly spreading the infection, making the other the zombie – my own otherness creates the other in others.

Spreading the infection of alienation

Even when there are times and places when people can come together in big groups I find invisible walls separating us. Last year I joined the Graduate Student Association (GSA) as a representative for my program. This was one of my attempts to consciously become 'more political' and 'informed' in my life on what I saw as a more local level.

I hated the GSA.

I went there and I felt so stupid. I felt like everyone knew what was going on except for me. As some time passed and I started to get a sense of things I finally had the guts to start asking some questions so that I could figure out what was going on. To my utter dismay, the most common answer to most of my questions was "I/we don't really know." Here I thought, I was the only stupid one in the bunch, but it turned out no one really knew what the hell was going on. And so what I had interpreted as knowledge and decisiveness was really just a big act. People were just pretending to know what was going on, but no one actually knew a thing and no one would really say it. Even I had a hard time saying it. We were pretending to be zombies amongst the people. Or

is it people among the zombies?

When I look back on this situation I now see that my own otherness contributed to this alienation. It's possible that I could have taken a more productive approach in this situation. Maybe actually pointed out the fact that no one really knows anything and brought that into the open. Not in a hostile accusatory way, but rather from a place of vulnerability. I could have tried to create an opening and thus a possibility for a new configuration of bodies. Obviously this is hypothetical and in fact could have resulted in more alienation. But there are unknown possibilities in these situations and I could have searched for an opening instead of succumbing to the closure and just writing off the GSA.

Discourses of individuality and rationality can at times make me limit my interactions with others. As in the above example, I thought I was the *only* one who didn't know what was going on. Furthermore, rationality might be seen to influence why everyone pretended to know what was going on: we played into assumptions about our knowledge as opposed to the reality of our knowledge. I was afraid to admit that I didn't know what was going on, and this was probably the case for other members as well. But we were too alienated from each other to share this with each other, and to collide in any sort of mutual joy.

When I look back on this situation, as a whole I see it as a failure or a lack. But what such dismissals render invisible is the vast amount of time and energy that I had simultaneously spent in other random places becoming political and how often I have random collisions with people I don't consider myself to be in "relationship" with (students, professors, strangers) that result in joy – the great amount of times that I myself am swept away by the multitude. This is not to say that my 'official' relationships are not part of the multitude. They are of course – but this focus on certain individuals or entities (like the GSA) can close up or cover up the opportunities for engagement of the multitude with other bodies which are ascribed as 'other', and the fact that the multitude can include any body at any time in partial relations.

Partial relations create the possibility for more relationships, or at least the recognition of all the relationships that exist in our lives that we take for granted. It's not as simple as good

relationships, bad relationships with certain people; but rather good moments and bad moments between bodies at different times.

In *Zombieland* in the end Columbus realizes that he has a new family – four strangers from different parts of the country come together to form a new assemblage. Obviously this is a simplification of partial relations as here we see the assemblage of entire entities once again – but despite this simplicity, the overall message is that we now have the opportunity to create new families based on difference, families that constantly shift and move. Here we see the possibility of a complex self, rather than self based on individualism. A self that acknowledges that it is made up of a vast amount of collisions between bodies, the self constantly forming an assemblage with the other, no matter where the other comes from. Similarly, we might be able to link this to the opportunities that the anomie of society creates for emerging adults: with a lack of structures to guide young people in their identity formation, an opportunity exists to create identities and communities based on difference.

However, recognizing the self in the other, and vice versa, is challenging when this recognition needs to be mutual. And this is most difficult when so many of us are socialized into separating the self and the other on a constant basis³⁴. As Spinoza points out, reasonable people are most beneficial to other reasonable people (Spinoza, 2000, p.249) – but it is most likely that we often come across people who are not reasonable; and we ourselves are not always reasonable either. The challenge to recognize the openings that exist when encountering others while maintaining our own sense of reason and encouraging reason in others is a complex one. From this perspective we can see how the the 'personal is political'. But this famous phrase from 2nd wave feminism takes on a different meaning in our times today, and in my life. The original

³⁴ This sort of socialization is most clearly exemplified with the separation of the sexes. As early as birth as most children are immediately categorized into sex and gender.

meaning is buried beneath a time increasingly marked by explicit individualism and consumerism.

7. The Kickass Woman From feminism to becoming-woman

In Jay Lee's (2008) *Zombie Strippers* – an over the top, satirical porn-meets-zombie flick – central to the plot is an intensified and caricatured form of female empowerment. In this movie, a virus is scientifically engineered by the US government as a military weapon. As a scientist explains:

It's a chemo virus designed to reanimate dead tissue and jump-start the brain's motor function. This would allow, say, a soldier to continue fighting after death. After one experiences death, fear is more or less gone. It enhances the combat mindset ...the brain functions of one fearless, uninhibited ...the drive of a take-no-prisoners soldier of raw survival instincts. It more or less turns a soldier into a super soldier. (Lee, 2008)

The downside to the virus is that the host deteriorates quickly and loses all control: “The zombified dead after that are but mindless monsters, with a voracious appetite for living flesh” (Lee, 2008). However, due to the virus' molecular structure, the virus remains more pure in females. As the film soon reveals, this means that female zombies actually retain their sense of control and become quite powerful. Taking a jab at patriarchy, the scientist points out that “once you get a man in there, like everything else – it all goes to shit.”

As one might predict, based on the film's title, the virus gets out into an underground strip club and the strippers become infected, essentially turning them into super strippers. The women in the movie are depicted as highly sexualized and feminine, but also as strong and courageous. As the lead stripper Kat describes, “You have to be a warrior, a soldier. Fearless, uninhibited. A stripper with a take-no-prisoners, raw survival instinct” (Lee, 2008). The women are conventionally gorgeous, the lead played by porn super star, Jenna Jameson : they have perfect skin, hair, slim bodies, full breasts. And they kick ass. Especially when they become zombies. Not only do the zombie strippers gain super strength, but suddenly the men desire the zombie

strippers more than the human strippers, showering the zombie strippers with more tips than ever.

On the one hand, these women may be viewed as highly commodified and exploited. The strip club is owned and run by men, for men. It may appear that the zombie strippers derive their power from the acceptance and objectification of men. The tables begin to turn, however, as the strippers not just give in to, but relish their zombie powers and instincts: they invite eager men into the private backrooms who are expecting a lap dance and maybe something a little more, and end up being eaten alive; their manhood the first thing to be devoured. And so on the other hand, the strippers can be seen as strong, independent women who appear to be in control of their bodies as well as the men's bodies. They enjoy stripping and furthermore we are informed at the beginning of the film that public nudity has been outlawed, making them rebels to the status quo – freedom fighters of sorts; freedom over the right to their own bodies. Not only that, but also women smart enough to exploit the law for their own benefit.

At first glance this depiction appealed to me very much. They looked powerful – I enjoyed watching them be utterly fearless and at times felt a sense of power. However, in the end the movie ends up undermining female power as the strippers become highly competitive with each other and destroy each other and themselves. This is problematic as it might be seen as dismissing feminism altogether: it all goes to shit once you get a man in there, but women don't do much better either. However, it can also be seen as dismissing a certain type of liberal feminism – one that is wrapped tightly within the confines of patriarchy and capitalism: female power based on the oppression and exploitation of others.

I found myself relating to this movie on several levels. The satire in the movie, in particular the feminist satire, highlights my own understanding of feminism and does not cover up, but rather reveals several problems in my understandings. The particular types of “feminisms” that I encounter in my life I often interpret in a manner that ultimately depoliticize

me, even if they make me feel good. Within the total subsumption of capital, meanings, histories and linearity are confused as they all happen at once, and feminism can be wrought with closures.

Just as the movie can be interpreted to dismiss feminism altogether, I too started my understanding of feminism here. What I would call my first 'official' interaction with feminism was deeply situated within the ideology of post-feminism³⁵. Post-feminism refers to

an active process by which feminist gains of the 1970s and 80s come to be undermined. It proposes that through an array of machinations, elements of contemporary popular culture are perniciously effective in regard to this undoing of feminism, while simultaneously appearing to be engaging in a well-informed and even well-intended response to feminism (McRobbie, 2004, p. 255).

Simply put, post-feminism perpetuates the idea that the work of feminism is complete, equality has been attained and feminism is no longer needed (Kinser, 2004). The way that this view manifested itself in my life was even more intensive than this: not only did I feel that feminism was not needed, but I felt that feminism itself was what was perpetuating inequality. I can recall, when I was in high school, writing a paper about how feminism had killed chivalry, and that the idea of women's equality allowed men to treat women even worse than before. Not having any knowledge of any other type of feminism, my understandings of post-feminism made me dismiss all of feminism. Looking back, however, it seems that my views were ironically actually a form of feminism, challenging the idea that feminism had brought and completed equality. I was in fact pointing out new inequalities; however, I mistakenly blamed my narrow view of feminism for this instead of patriarchy, capitalism and my post-feminist (non)sensibilities.

³⁵ As Kinser (2004) and others point out, the term 'post-feminism' is highly contested and debatable, at times being confused and used interchangeably with third-wave feminism. For the purposes of this writing, I will be using the term 'post-feminism' to refer to a sort of anti-feminism, rather than more productive forms of feminism which are at times labelled with post-feminism.

As I continued on into my university education I came to see that feminism was indeed still needed. However, my new understandings of feminism faced new challenges. My understandings often got swept under commodity feminism and even now it is often within commodity feminism that I struggle.

The term commodity feminism refers specifically to post-feminism within the capitalist market, where “disparate systems of femininity and feminism have been juxtaposed and spliced together” (Papps, 2010, p. 2). What's interesting about commodity feminism is that it is a mish-mash of real 'constituent' feminism spliced with femininity and consumerism, and certainly collides with post-feminism in several manners. Although highly problematic, I would argue it certainly has its roots within constituent forms of feminism – particularly second wave³⁶ feminism. In particular, the phrase the “personal is political” echoes in my understandings of feminism today; however, it gets filtered through the lenses of individuality, rationality and consumerism.

The idea that the personal is political when I hear it can be easily interpreted as 'the individual is political'. The personal being about all about 'me': what I like and don't like, what I do or don't do. The original meaning of the phrase is largely rooted in the radical feminist movement of the 1960s. This phrase expresses that there is no distinction between public “political” realms and private “personal” realms; the personal is political because men are seen to “systematically dominate women in every area of life” (Jagger, 1983, p. 101). This phrase has

³⁶ Because of the limited scope of this chapter I will not be discussing the different waves of feminism in detail. For a brief yet poignant overview please refer to Kinser (2004). It should also be noted that the use of 'waves' is also problematic, as it mostly limits feminism to the struggle of white, middle-class women and leaves out the struggles of the majority of other women in the world, as well as throughout history. For the purposes of thesis, since I am trying to discuss particular assemblages of feminism most vivid in my understanding of the political I will place much focus on second wave feminism. I would argue that the idea of second wave feminism as I understand it (which is inaccurate and incomplete) is a powerful dark assemblage that has come together in my life, ordering the political.

been interpreted differently by different feminists., but in essence refers to how all relationships between men and women are seen as institutionalized relationships of power (Hanisch, 2009; Jagger, 1983). But when I hear this phrase, naturally as part of the “me generation” I easily interpret this as meaning that the political is *all about me*. Ironically, however, at first I did not understand the oppression of women to be about *me*. As I became more aware of the gender inequalities that exist, I tended to see this inequality as affecting *other* women, instead of myself. And so where the personal became political for me was in trying to help these *other* women: I donated to charitable causes focused on girls and women, and tried to shop more ethically since most cheap labour around the world is largely done by women. Unfortunately, my reaction to this inequality was to turn to changing the way I consume instead of other actions. The inequalities between men and women from my view were largely economic and global and I couldn't see how these same inequalities were actually in my own life at a local and micro level. And so these micro relations remained unchallenged as I tried to make donations and consume more fairly, which ironically was very expensive, especially when you're a student who doesn't have much money to begin with (which in itself could be situated within gender inequality). Here we can see how my entrenchment in individualism might influence me to appropriate feminism in a depoliticizing way.

Further, this intensive individualism also encouraged me to be a rational feminist, in other words, to be alienated from myself and my immediate reality. Challenging the ideas of gender inequalities is difficult. People (especially men) tend not to take you very seriously: you'll hear that people deserve what they get and that women do it to themselves. And when I'm not taken seriously – I get upset. And this is the worst. Because if I get upset I'm taken even less seriously. If I want to talk to a man about inequality I need to be calm and rational and I certainly cannot cry about it, as crying will undermine my whole argument. Challenging inequalities on a

personal level in my own life seemed pointless; all it did was make me feel stupid and most of the time ended with me fiercely holding back tears. So I stopped doing it. Not really realizing that in trying to challenge the inequality of other women, I was experiencing my own inequality, which I dismissed. Instead I stuck to the things that made me feel good. No one's going to make me cry for trying to shop more ethically.

Here we see a culmination of the closures of individuality and rationality attempting to organize the chaos and “hysteria” of feminism into a neat package of 'female empowerment'. And usually the easiest way for me attain this sort of empowerment when all else failed was to buy it through the 'correct' and 'ethical' consumer choices. Essentially, this means being the good bourgeois citizen/consumer, and not causing any trouble or disturbances (stop your crying and go buy yourself something nice).

Capital will always capture me

So here I am again. Nothing but a docile zombie. NOOO! How the hell is it that I always end up here!? Why does capital always catch me – why do I let it?

That's it. I've had enough of this.

So I rejected commodity feminism – but in a really extreme way. And here is where I got utterly lost. In order to reject commodity feminism, I felt I had to reject capitalism. Completely. I tried to go outside of capitalism – *outside of myself*. And where did I end up? Well, in the total subsumption of capital there is nowhere else to go. The only place to go is nowhere. So that's where I went. Straight into the black w/hole of lack. Yes, that's right. I did the impossible.

The thing about doing the impossible... well, it's not possible. So you end up doing *nothing*. Okay, this might once again be a bit of an exaggeration. I didn't actually do nothing *all*

the time. But it *felt* like nothing *all the time*. And this is not the same kind of nothing that I was talking about in chapter two. Because even the things that I did do, I didn't really feel like doing them. Sometimes I didn't see the point in doing anything. This time of nothing was a closure, not an opening. And all the while I was desperately seeking a way out. But I just couldn't find it. I couldn't remember what I was looking for. I became a hamster in wheel; running, but always in the same spot. The pit of lack is deep.

In this time I did, however, explore feminism in more depth; the history of the different types of feminisms and I searched for the feminisms of real people, now. I read books and blogs; and I began to see the world through the eyes of feminist critique. In my pit of lack I began to relate very deeply to feminism; I could see where inequality was playing out in my own life. What I didn't see was that I was colliding with only certain types of feminism: I was primarily coming across strands of liberal feminism, some forms of Marxist feminism, but mostly, radical feminism.

Very briefly, liberal feminism refers to a feminism that aligns with capitalism in many ways. It is premised on equal liberty, or opportunity for ownership, for both men and women as individuals. In many ways liberal feminism proposes that women should have the same rights as men do. A main focus for liberal feminism is the equal redistribution of wealth (Jagger, 1983).

Marxist feminism extends class relations to theorize inequalities between the genders and posits that the institution of the family makes the women subservient to the man, since she must rely on him for economic security. Furthermore, the woman is seen to be alienated from public life as she often remains in the home. A main focus of Marxist feminism is not necessarily the equal redistribution of wealth, but rather to bring all women into the public realm of social production (Jagger, 1983).

Radical feminism places the root of women's oppression within patriarchal society, in

which men dominate over women in every area of life. Generally, most radical feminists see the institutions of male domination to form an almost impenetrable grid. "This grid is a male construction that enables men to control women's bodies and that traps women as forced mothers and as sexual slaves" (Jagger, 1983, p. 270). A main goal of radical feminism is for women to regain control of their bodies and to build a womanculture based on values of trust, nurturance and sensuality (Jagger, 1983).

What the above types of feminism have in common, is their placement of men and women in opposition to each other. A dialectical formation that can easily result in a sense of lack, on either side of the opposition. This feminist lack only deepened the lack I was already experiencing. All this critique of patriarchy (and capital as they cannot really be separated) only made me try to step further outside of it. I hated it. I hated living in a world where everything seemed to be set up against me. I started to understand the personal as political more accurately; however, I found this to be a hopeless struggle with no solutions offered. The personal started to seem like my own political hell.

Fucking men!

Sometimes I fucking hate them! why the hell does he get to win everything? why do i always have to be the more understanding one! why do i always have to be the bigger person and give in to what HE wants? why cant i be more powerful, why does he have to have all of it. and why do i give it to him? why doesnt he give it to me? I fucking hate this world! how am i not supposed to feel lack when men are such pretentious fucking assholes- and then they just turn it around and blame everything on you. they dont take any responsibility for the fact that they are assholes. they just act like they're better than everyone. I don't know how to deal with this. no one ever teaches you how. they only ever teach you how to be a bitch back – no one ever teaches you how to be productive. i hate feeling this way. im so tired. im just so fucking tired. im tired of giving. im tired of this stupid lack. im so tired. the world will never get better. how am i supposed to be productive when im so angry. im so angry. fucking men!!! they always want everything their way. if they get their way its because theyre so mature and rational and if i ever want something my way- im just a selfish, immature bitch.

fuck woman can't win.

only men can win. cuz even when a women wins then she's just considered a selfish bitch. she cant celebrate winning. men not only can win, but they can feel good about winning. they have no guilt. Because its like somehow they think they deserve to win.

how can we both win? how can it be productive? i don't know how to solve this problem. i dont know how to be productive. and i dont want to be god fucking damnit!!

The day I wrote the above was not a good day for me. I spent most of it crying and angry. Feeling this way was not an isolated incident for some time. I essentially found myself inhabiting what Spinoza calls the sad passions.

By emotion I understand the affections of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, helped or hindered, and at the same time the ideas of these affections. If, therefore, we can be the adequate cause of one of these affections, then I understand by the emotion an action; otherwise, I understand it to be a passion. (Spinoza, 2000, III, Def. 3, p. 164)

In other words, any emotion that makes you stop acting and renders you passive is a passion.

It seems like all the critiques that feminism allowed me to make in my life were accurate. Yes, the world is indeed set up in an unequal manner. I was right to feel angry – this was a reasonable reaction to the inequality I am embedded in. However, where I lost it and became unreasonable was when I lost sight of the causes of things.³⁷ As discussed earlier, Spinoza (2000) argues that we confuse and don't understand the proper causes of things and attribute causes to inadequate ideas. These inadequate ideas often lead us into the sad passions.

The cause of inequality within capitalism and patriarchy cannot be attributed to any one individual, as inequality is the structure *all bodies* are embedded in and uphold, rather than any

³⁷ Note the use of the word 'unreasonable' here, not 'irrational'. One could have deemed me as irrational at the point where I expressed anger at inequality. The observance of inequality can be deemed as rational, but becomes undermined by my body expressing the emotion of anger. It makes me wonder if a female feminist can ever be rational, as that would entail separating her thoughts from the way her body is positioned in society; the rational female feminist would be alienated from her very self and hence although rational, unreasonable.

one body. My rage and hatred was aimed towards men in my life, as it is with them that I can often experience these unequal power relations. Spinoza (2000) explains this error I have made (with my observations bracketed within):

From the mere fact that we imagine a thing [in my case, men in my life] to have something that is similar to an object which is accustomed to affect our mind with pleasure or pain [patriarchy], we shall love or hate the thing, even though that in respect of which it is similar to the object is not the efficient cause of these emotions. (III, Prop. 16, p.177)

So, a) I was solely blaming the men in my life for patriarchy and sexism and b) because all bodies are embedded and uphold patriarchy and sexism, I failed to see *myself* as complicit to this dark assemblage.

I am sexist.

When I feel lack because of a perceived sexist injustice... I am sexist. And I don't mean some sort of 'reverse' sexism against men. I mean that I am sexist against myself. I look down on all women when I accept myself in that subordinate position.

I am reinforcing lack, and sexism. Through feminist critique I see men as the other, and by doing that I also other myself. Although feminism can reveal certain power relations in my life to me, like other political experiences in my life these insights often end up swept away under extremely negative feelings (anger, guilt, sadness, shame). ~

It turns out that my 'feeling compass' is totally fucked up!!! My own feelings work to discipline and depoliticize me. The other is always within me, putting me down. I am self and other. The other is myself. At times I am so alienated from true constituent desire and pleasure, that I don't even allow myself to experience it. Or I ignore my constitutive pleasure and instead engage in my consumptive pleasures as the idea of 'empowerment' is surrounded by these fake feel-good feelings that cover up its emptiness and placebo effect. Or my constituent desires are so intense that they frighten me and I hide from them, I try to avoid them. As if they are not going to catch up to me... or more like I will eventually catch up to them, but it will be too late.

The anger in my life is real and constituent, as it is based on my collision with other

bodies within the dark assemblage of patriarchy. What gets confusing though is although you must deal with things at a micro level of relationship you must still keep the macro relations in mind that came to structure the very micro relations you are part of. Being angry at individuals who are deemed as male is not productive – being angry at male as a category is fine – as long as this anger is not aimed at a body that is inscribed as male.

I would like to propose to look at the category of male (not the actual male body) as the majoritarian. The majoritarian refers to a category of being that holds a state of majority: adult, male, white, bourgeois, etc. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe the concept of the majoritarian: “...we are referring not to a greater relative quantity but to the determination of a state or standard in relation to which larger quantities, as well as the smallest can be said to be minoritarian: white-man, adult-male, etc.” (p. 291). Elsewhere, they add, “Majority assumes a state of power and domination, not the other way around ... For the majority, insofar as it is analytically included in the abstract standard, is never anybody, it is always Nobody (1987, p. 105).

The majoritarian only exists as an abstract concept, it is not an actual person. The concept of the majoritarian itself indeed affects and can structure our realities, but the beauty of a concept is that it can be challenged. If we challenge the concept of the majoritarian in our own lives, eventually the structures may too change, little by little in small pieces. This we can apply not only to the male majoritarian, but to the adult majoritarian as well, with emerging adulthood challenging this state with its very existence.

I have found that engaging with binarized forms of feminism, particularly radical feminism, can create a deep closure for me. The opposition to patriarchy seems to only be possible within this same patriarchal framework. Further, this opposition can easily be interpreted as an opposition towards men themselves and was not productive for me. This sort of binarized opposition only led to passive anger which depoliticized me. However, anger should not be

dismissed nor should inequality. They need only be looked at from a more productive and immanent lens, one of partial relations. Feminism does have openings, and brings much insight into my life when I view it through partial relations. Even commodity feminism may have something to add in a partial way.

Anger I would argue can also take an active form. Anger is a good indicator that our desires are not being enacted (as are other sad passions). But in order for this anger to be active and productive, it needs to be based on desire and love. Spinoza (2000) says there are many different configurations of emotions; only those which are related to joy (pleasure) or desire are active (Prop. 59, p. 211). And so anger based on desire and love has the potential to create a productive feminist force. In other words, in order for feminism to retain its political openness feminism needs to be based on the desire of women in and of themselves. Not compared to men. Or really not compared to anyone, but rather seen to be in conjunction with all others, as an assemblage. Such views are found in many contemporary and socialist feminisms (Jagger, 1983). Skott-Myhre (2009) and Kinser (2004) both point to keeping one foot in feminist critiques based on dialectics and one foot out; standing somewhere in the middle. A feminism in which we see that “women are both subject to power as a form of dominance but also transmit power as they produce their lives in ways that escape domination’s full effect” (Skott-Myhre, 2009, p. 6).

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) speak of such an assemblage when they introduce the concept of the becoming-woman. The becoming-woman is a subset of the becoming-minoritarian. The minoritarian here is the counterpart of the majoritarian, not in quantity as described above, but in that in that it is the becoming of everybody; the minoritarian is not the abstract, 'Nobody', but rather the lived and concrete every/body. In essence the majoritarian is related to the closure of the constituted force, while the minoritarian is itself the constituent

force³⁸. The becoming-woman is a set of movements that explode the crisis of the constituent from within, from the middle.

There is no becoming-majoritarian; majority is never becoming. All becoming is minoritarian. Women, regardless of their numbers, are a minority, definable as a state or subset; but they create only by making possible a becoming over which they do not have ownership into which they themselves must enter; this is a becoming-woman affecting all of humankind, men and women both (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 106)

The type of feminism seen in the zombie movie, *Fido* (Currie, 2006), may be on the right track to merging with the becoming-woman, especially when compared to the feminism found in *Zombie Strippers* (Lee, 2008). In *Zombie Strippers* what we see in the transformation of the strippers into zombie strippers is the impossible becoming of the majoritarian. The women in their new found individual power negate themselves as they fail to create a zombie horde. The individualistic and competitive spirit of the zombie strippers is based on lack (in themselves and each other) and leads them to destroy each other and themselves, a total annihilation. In contrast, in *Fido* we see the main female character form an interesting assemblage with the male characters by the end of the film.

In short, *Fido* is a humorous zombie-meets-Lassie film. Set somewhere around the 1950s in a nuclear family centred suburbia, the film reveals that radiation from space caused the dead to come back to life and that humanity fought in the “Zombie wars”. Humanity prevailed; however, the radiation still turns those who die into zombies. As a result, the corporation ZomCom has created a security system to keep the zombies at check. This is done in two primary ways:

³⁸ We might be able to compare the majoritarian and minoritarian to the bourgeois and proletariat. As Marx (1978) explains, the bourgeois and proletariat form a sort of whole, as do the the majoritarian and minoritarian. However, the majoritarian and minoritarian go beyond class inequalities, and rather represent all forms of inequality: gender, race, age, sexuality, etc.

securing cities with high voltage fences and through the use of electric collars which subdue the zombies' urge to eat flesh. With the collars in place, the zombies are harmless and used as people's servants, as well as in the place of other low-skill labourers.

The film centres around the Robinson family. Helen is married to Bill Robinson, who is zombie-phobic after being traumatized in the zombie wars³⁹. When the new chief of security at ZomCom moves in across the street Helen buys a zombie, against Bill's wishes, in order to keep up with appearances as they are the only ones on the street who don't own a zombie. The Robinsons' son, Timmy, befriends the zombie and calls him Fido, beginning the boy-zombie relationship based off of the Lassie inspired boy-dog relationship. At one point, Fido's collar malfunctions and he ends up eating the neighbour; he does not, however, hurt Timmy, or as seen later in the movie, Timmy's mother, Helen. Drama unfolds in the movie, and at the end Bill ends up dying and is decapitated and buried according to his wishes. Helen, as we see throughout the movie forms a relationship with Fido. Helen's romantic relationship with Fido might be seen as becoming-woman that is based on men and women transforming together. Throughout the movie we often see Helen taking advantage of her position as a woman to enact her desires. She subverts what one might deem as her exploitation as a woman into her power, using it to rise up as minoritarian. In particular we see her turning to Fido, when her husband ignores her. And here we see a particular transformation come from the man as well, a departure from his state of majoritarian as Fido's zombification here might be seen as the man taking part in becoming-woman, both man and women meeting in the middle of gendered power relations.

The feminist undertone in *Fido* is a step in the right direction towards becoming, but is

³⁹ As a side note, Bill also takes no interest in his wife or family in the present moment. It is obvious that she is pregnant and he fails to notice this. Bill, in his extreme zombie-phobia, is only concerned with saving money for his family members' future funerals – as one can choose to be decapitated and buried instead of being a zombie after their death.

still somewhat incomplete. Becoming-minoritarian goes beyond simply gender relations, challenging all other majoritarian states. *Fido* would have come closer to the becoming-minoritarian if it had interrogated other majoritarian lines of identity, especially race, as the movie is quintessentially a story about white suburbia.

8. The Zombie Child

From Majoritarian to Becoming-minoritarian

Out of all the chapters I had planned for this thesis, this is the one that remained virtually empty for the longest amount of time. I had created notes for chapters nine and ten long before I had put any real notes in for this chapter. This hesitation is significant, as I will soon explain.

A common feature in zombie movies is the zombie child. Many zombie movies face us with this problem; just to name a few: *Dawn of the Dead* (both Snyder, 2004 and Romero, 1978), *Fido* (Currie, 2006), *Survival of the Dead* (Romero, 2009) and the original, *Night of the Living Dead* (Romero, 1968). The little girl in the cellar who has been hurt in the *Night of the Living Dead* is a crucial climax in what is often deemed as the first “official” zombie horror. As all hell starts to break loose the little girl turns into a zombie and then proceeds to kill her parents and then devour them.

The little girl in *Night of the Living Dead* is not only feminized, but I would argue racialized as well. The little girl herself is white, but her transformation into one of ‘those things’ renders her as the zombie other⁴⁰. The racialization of the zombie other becomes more apparent when we recall the history of the zombie and the colonial fears it embodies in the Haitian voodoo tradition.

Within the zombie apocalypse the zombie child is the epitome of horror. This horror can be seen to arise from the juxtaposition of her absolute innocence with a monstrous force of destruction; the mutation of the constituent. The zombie child can be likened to the epitome of horror within the total subsumption of capital: the child of poverty, especially the child of

⁴⁰ The juxtaposition of the zombie other with the racialized other is apparent in *Night of the Living Dead*, as well as some of Romero's other films, and can certainly be applied to the racialized other in general, not just the child. In *Night of the Living Dead*, the final scenes reflect a haunting realism: Ben, the protagonist, a black man, survives the whole ordeal only to be shot in the end by the (what could be called white and 'redneck') rescue team as he is mistaken for a zombie. The end credits role as we see a pile of bodies, with Ben's being thrown in, and then set on fire. The prominence of the black man in the pile of bodies being burned can easily be viewed as not a scene from some imaginary zombie apocalypse, but rather a not so distant memory of racialized massacres.

absolute poverty. The child of absolute poverty is obviously implicated within class relations but is also feminized and above all, racialized.

It is because of the latter that I have hesitated in writing this chapter. The fact is, I have been scared to death to write this chapter. In Canada, to even talk about race is the equivalent of being racist. Race does not exist in Canada, we are 'multicultural' and 'colourblind'. Race situates itself as yet another closure of the political in my life, a closure so intensive that it is difficult for me to even face it. For this reason I fear that out of all my chapters, this will be my most inadequate one. I am quite certain that I will not be able to penetrate this issue to the depth that it deserves. But I am also certain that you have to start somewhere, So I will start here.

It has become clear to me now, that I am racist. Race and racism certainly exist in Canada, but multiculturalism muddles this up, like a small child mixing all her paints together to create something that really isn't a colour at all. The child then gets praised for this beautiful piece of artwork that doesn't really resemble anything. This is Canada. And figuratively speaking the colour that Canada has mixed together is 'white'. This is the colour that I live in – or more correctly, the *lack of colour* that I live in. I cannot help but white-wash everything, even when I think that I am doing the opposite.

A prime example of this is the child that I sponsor. A few years ago, after a lifetime of watching sponsorship ads on television I finally decided to sponsor a child. I picked a little, six year old girl from Kenya. How typical of my racist self. I picked as young, dark, and poor as I could. I picked the epitome of lack. What this epitome of lack covers up, however, is the epitome of my white privilege and condescension.

Duped again

What really scares me is how might sponsorship be yet another form of colonization? White people going in trying to make things 'better' even though our lifestyles perpetuate the inequality

that creates the "problems" we are trying to solve. How much of sponsoring a child is really about making someone's life better, and how much of it is about making myself feel better? Am I just trying to be the hero in the zombie movie? Oh, great. I'm back here again. I'm yet again trying to be the 'good bourgeois citizen'.

I haven't really engaged with my sponsor child for a long time now. Some of this is for practical reasons: I seriously don't know what to say to her... or whoever... I've never really received a letter from her, but instead her mother or her uncle; which has made it difficult to establish a coherent sense of rapport. Who am I writing to anyways? But I have also been ignoring this issue for months now, because it's filled me with guilt and shame. I feel so dumb for letting myself be duped. The anger that I feel towards the injustices of something like residential schooling in Canada becomes flipped back upon me. Am I any different from those who tried to "civilize" young Aboriginal children? How can I really know that the organization I'm giving money to is making positive change, or are they just perpetuating lack? Am I perpetuating lack? As they say, the road to hell is always paved with good intentions.

Child sponsorship, in a way, can be viewed as a solution to the problem of social-economic inequality that is to be consumed. Every month my bank account tells me, "your work here is done". In this way my own poverty is hidden from me. My own poverty in fact being my privilege. My white privilege creates a closure of the political for me, as this privilege is based on someone else lacking, which creates a lack in myself.

Accepting a state of lack is a very selfish thing, and a very condescending thing when you really examine it. Even if you're feeling guilt and shame, which is what I've really been feeling for a while: guilt that I have so much and that other people don't. Basically, that my life is better than others'.

Just that statement says a lot. My life is better than others'. It might be coming from a place of guilt and shame, but it still implicates the other as worse than me. It still places me above someone. You cannot have guilt without implicating the other in a negative and condescending way, and hence implicating yourself. "Humility⁴¹ is not virtue, or, it does not arise from reason"

⁴¹ I use Spinoza's proposition on humility here to discuss guilt, as I believe that based on his definition given (coming up shortly in the text) this might be an appropriate interpretation. Where Spinoza's work is notoriously deemed as full of confusion, is in his awkward use of terminology which often contradicts contemporary

(Spinoza, 2000, IV, Prop. 53, p. 265). In the demonstration that follows the aforementioned proposition, Spinoza explains that

humility is a pain which arises from the fact that a man contemplates his lack of power.

[...] Therefore, if a man, whilst he contemplates himself, this is not a virtue of the fact that he understands himself, but it is by virtue of the fact that his power of acting is hindered.

White privilege creates another closure of the political for me. My privilege allows me to other someone which in fact means othering myself in the process. By othering myself into being white, I erase myself by accepting the state of the majoritarian. Because the majoritarian is premised on the lack of the other, I cannot help but implicate myself in this lack.

On the one hand, by being majoritarian I alienate myself from reality. Because this is an abstract positioning, the intensive rationality of subsumption alienates me from my body and immediate surroundings. The positioning of majoritarian makes it appear that 'my work is done' and allows me to ignore all the things that I could be doing in my day to day life that might challenge racism. I am not sure what these things might be, but this in fact only points out my alienation because if I did know what these things were it would point to the awareness of the micropolitics of my life when it comes to race.

On the other hand, because the majoritarian is Nobody, I cannot actually be the majoritarian. Being white is not just about having a certain skin colour. In fact if you trace the history many ethnicities that are deemed as "white" today one will find that many have not always been deemed so (Kivel, 2002; Skott-Myhre; 2008). White is more than a skin color it is a status, a certain type of dark assemblage that we all work to construct. In other words to view whiteness as an individual characteristic, such as skin colour, hides a history of struggle. In fact it

definitions we now adhere to. Because here Spinoza explains humility in terms of pain, I feel guilt could be a reasonable comparison. I will address humility as a positive attribute, one based on an appreciate of one's knowledge and its limits, later in the chapter when I discuss pride, qualities of a 'free man, and humbling myself.

can hide my own struggles.

Growing up in an Polish immigrant home, the status of white has never fit so neatly. Yes, we have white skin, but other characteristics 'give us away': accents, mannerisms, preferences. This is not to say that my own struggles are equal to or even comparable to those of people of colour, but they do exist and my own whiteness can cover them up at times. My point here is that the multitude cannot benefit from racism – I undoubtedly benefit in some ways, but overall my racism disadvantages not only others but myself as well. If I place myself within the assemblage of the multitude and strip away the illusion of individualism, it becomes clear that although there may be immediate and concrete benefits to racism the end result can only be more alienation and a decrease in capacities. Alternatively, the benefits to struggling as part of the multitude may be the expansion of capacities that is possibly eternal.

But what do I do now? This question is not easy to answer. I don't feel that changing my lifestyle will fix anything or change anything. But it is here where maybe I am wrong again... forgetting partial relations again. Maybe the changes in my lifestyle do make a difference. And maybe the key to avoiding guilt here, or any condescension is acknowledging that I am only doing a small part. I cannot change everything. But I can change something. And by changing something, maybe I allow others to change something too – and together maybe our small changes create a force of change? Feeling guilty and not doing anything doesn't accomplish anything. I just have to do something and move on, and hope I do enough somethings to add up, with my own, as well as other people's somethings into something much bigger beyond my/our perception. I need to accept that I will never be a hero.

Why do I want to be a hero?

Ever since I was a little kid I always wanted to be a hero. I wanted to be good. And not just kind

of good – I want/ed to be the epitome of good. I want to be the good person. I want to prove that I'm better than everyone (who is 'everyone?') thinks that I am; I want to prove my moral and rational superiority. The problem with being good is that it is predicated on there being a bad, an epitome of bad. Can I be good without my sponsor child being 'bad'?

The hero is in fact, the “good bourgeois citizen”. The hero is the colonizer; the hero is the one who knows what's right; the hero makes the judgements; the hero is better than everyone else, including those she is trying to save.

The hero is the exaltation of individual empowerment. The hero is not seen to be part of an assemblage, s/he is outside the assemblage. The hero gets all the credit for all the force of the multitude instead of being seen as part of the multitude. The hero is transcendent not immanent. The hero sees herself as the sole cause of good, as opposed to a partial cause. Spinoza (2000) calls this the passion of pride. “Pride is to be defined as the pleasure that arises from a false opinion whereby a man thinks he is above all others” (IV, Prop. 57, Sch., p. 267). The greatest of pride is seen to be as the greatest ignorance of oneself, and hence the greatest impotence of mind (Spinoza, 2000, IV, Props. 55 and 56). It is the depoliticization of the multitude.

In *Zombieland* (Fleischer, 2009), one of Columbus Ohio's rules for survival is “Don't be a hero”. I always giggle at the presentation of this rule in the movie. Columbus would really like to impress a girl, but instead lets Tallahassee face the upcoming zombie as he tells us about the aforementioned rule. This is funny because the underlying assumption behind the joke is that you should be a hero; you are a coward if you're not. Columbus, however, is a scrawny guy who has many phobias, whereas Tallahassee is a bigger, macho man: “he was in the ass kicking business, and business is good” (Fleischer, 2009). Columbus' rule in this scenario shows that he is not ignorant of himself and of his relation to Tallahassee; he understands that Tallahassee is far more capable in facing the zombie and hence keeping everyone alive. For Columbus to be a hero in this situation can be seen as unreasonable, as it could just result in his death. Here we can see how the 'hero' is a figure that tries to transcend the multitude, and is thus unreasonable. Spinoza

tells us that “the virtue of a free man” in other words, one led by reason, “is seen to be equally great in avoiding as in overcoming dangers” (IV, Prop. 69, p. 277). Based on this we can see that in this way Columbus harbours qualities of a “free man”. Throughout the movie, Columbus does not always back down. He is not a coward as he does fight when the situation warrants it, showing that “in a free man, therefore, timely flight is held to show as much courage as is fighting; or, a free man chooses flight with the same courage, i.e., presence of mind, as he chooses battle⁴²” (Spinoza, 2000, IV, Prop. 69, Cor., p. 277).

The 'hero' is really just the death of the constituent in disguise.

And so maybe by giving up on the idea of being a hero, is how I might become part of something much bigger than a hero. Recognizing that perhaps I will never see the change that I am a part of, and humbling myself enough to accept I will never know the outcome may create an opening in the political. This opening brings me back into the multitude.

I am part of an assemblage. And I am part of many dark assemblages. When I am part of an assemblage, I have some power within it. What are things I can do to make sure that the assemblages I'm part of are interrupted? How can I play a part in making sure these assemblages get reorganized in more productive ways? I do not know the answers to these questions. But I know these are the questions I should be asking if I want to be part of the multitude.

Maybe sponsoring a child doesn't mean that much. But that small part of my life with all the other small parts of my life may be making a difference. I was mad at myself for sponsoring a child, because it seemed like putting money towards something like this doesn't challenge capitalism, but perhaps enforces it and perhaps enforces colonialism. And maybe it does to some

⁴² In this sense, we might posit Tallahassee as a hero and as reasonable in the previous scenario discussed. However, I would argue that in the way that I am using the term hero (as one who transcends the multitude) Tallahassee would not warrant this title as his actions are not idolized, but rather are an expansion of his and the whole group's capacities.

degree, and it certainly would if that's as far as I went. If that's where I stopped. But I don't stop there. I challenge capital with so many parts of my being.

Undoubtedly, many of my reasons for child sponsorship came from problematic places. But there is some hope in sponsorship, as there is a reason that I sponsored a child that came from a place of abundance and desire. I sponsored a child as a student. I didn't have much money – in fact I myself could be considered to be living beneath the poverty line in Canada. I had always wanted to sponsor a child but did not feel that I could. And even as a student I felt that couldn't. I kept telling myself, “One day when I have more money I'll sponsor a child”. Until one day it dawned on me: actually, I *can* sponsor a child now. I don't need to wait until I “have more money” (M-C-M”). I have money now. Not a lot of money. But I can certainly sponsor a child.

One of the reasons I sponsored a child was because I wanted to and felt I could. Where this might be viewed as a sacrifice because I didn't have much money, I never felt it that way nor do I now. I never miss that money. I never think to myself, I wish I didn't sponsor that child so I could have all that money. I say this not to depict myself as some sort of 'good person' or hero, but as an indicator of the abundance we possess. The problems of inequality in the world do not exist because we do not have enough for everyone. These problems exist because a few of us have far too much, and are not sharing. If I am someone who does not have very much, but still has enough to spare, think of how much many others have to spare. There is no lack, we only perceive that there is.

My very desire to give challenges capital, and indirectly racism. I challenge capital by refusing to speak in certain ways. And I challenge capital by taking a stand against racism, as insufficient as that stand may be: I don't always keep my mouth shut when I hear racist comments; I refute emails that spread racist propaganda, and when someone says Canada is such a great country I tell them about residential schooling. And doing these things certainly never

make me feel like a hero. Things get awkward. Sometimes there's crying, sometimes there's anger and screaming; tantrums. If anything, these things make me feel like a monster.

I become the zombie child.

This becoming implies “two simultaneous movements, one by which a term (the subject) is withdrawn from the majority, and another by which a term (the medium or agent) rises up from the minority” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 291). When I become the zombie child 'I' suddenly becomes 'we'. I withdraw from the white-majoritarian and rise up from zombie-minoritarian. Seemingly raising from the dead, together we become the zombie child.

In fact, becoming the zombie child may encompass more than just two simultaneous movements. The becoming zombie child may be the becoming of everybody, the universal becoming-minoritarian, as the zombie child implicates race, gender, as well as age. Making these movements encompass infinities within infinities. In fact, we might see emerging adulthood as a central space for these infinities to be encompassed.

Becoming-minoritarian does not transcend, but instead transforms the majoritarian, just as emerging adulthood transforms adulthood into something new and different. It's not about eluding the majoritarian, but instead about eluding “the death sentence it envelopes, how to develop its power of escape, how to prevent escape from veering into the imaginary or falling into a black hole, how to maintain or draw out the revolutionary potential” of the majoritarian (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p.110).

9. The Escape

There comes a point in most zombie movies, that no matter how good the quarantine, the characters eventually always want to leave. This is especially exemplified in Romero's (1978) and Snyder's (2004) *Dawn of the Dead*. What's interesting is that in both versions of *Dawn of the Dead*, we see the ideal quarantine. The characters take refuge in a mall and barricade themselves in order to keep the zombies out. In both movies the mall is enormous and stocked with everything they would need to survive for a very long time, considering there is only a few of them staying there. Moreover, the mall doesn't just cater to the characters' basic needs, but most other material wants. Despite this the characters desperately want to leave.

Here we see, as argued by Negri and Hardt (2004), Skott-Myhre (2008) and others, that the constituent always comes *before* not after the oppressive power of the constituted. The desire to leave the mall is a constituent one not born out of lack, but out of the sheer force of counterpower. The constituent is already moving instead towards a different opening within time and space to express itself without the quarantine really creating a closure first (Negri, 1999). The desire for life and freedom in the quarantine creates cooperation no matter how much the people dislike each other. They desire something more, they refuse to lack – and several simultaneous movements begin.

This thesis began with me trying to understand the political in my life. According to my understanding at the beginning of this project, I thought that I was apathetic and disengaged. This narrow understanding was my quarantine. Apathy was part of my escape. However, this perceived apathy was always there. I came into this project not knowing that I had already escaped. We desire the escape before we even perceive it; this thesis itself has always been a movement of counterpower. What seemed like barriers to my understanding of the political, were also the actual springboards of the political; the constituent. When I look back to the beginning of

thesis, I can see that I did it all wrong – but this was actually the key to my escape. It's almost as if the escape had been planned all along even when I was wrong: I created the very quarantine from which I would escape. I will attempt to retrace this journey of escape for you now.

In the first chapter, I addressed my desires for a political subjectivity, but found that these desires were based on a constituted form of power: I desired an adult bourgeois citizenship, which did not seem attainable to me. I was clearly aware that there was a problem with such a conceptualization of the political and in chapter two, I located this problem within the crisis of power: the conflation between the constituent and constituted force. If the constituent and constituted are conflated, how do you tell them apart? At this point, it seems that in my confusion here I gave up my desire for the constituted, as I questioned the legitimacy of adulthood citizenship, and I accepted myself as a zombie. Essentially, I rejected the constituted and embraced the constituent. I embraced my zombie self and escaped into the constituent.

However, within the total subsumption of capital the escape is not that easy. As was discussed, because of the intensity of the opposition that the constituent and constituted are assembled in within capital, coupled with the infinite deferral of the constitutive, capitalism is fraught with explosive violence and mutations. We are brought back to Deleuze and Guattari's problem of how to accomplish an escape without death, or mutation.

In many zombie movies we see escapes fail. In *Dawn of the Dead* (Snyder, 2004) several characters die during the escape. Despite much planning, the sheer number of zombies overwhelms the group as they try to escape the mall. Characters die while trying to fight zombies but instead kill themselves and each other: a man loses control of a chainsaw and kills several of his allies; while yet another gets bitten and stays behind so as to not infect the rest of the group. Despite high amounts of cooperation escapes fail. Eventually, my own escape failed, and I found myself in a black hole of nothing. Death.

In this thesis I experienced two different, but interrelated escapes. I referred to them as 'doing nothing'. The first 'doing nothing' did not start out as death, it was a flight into the constituent. It is this escape, however, that led to my death in the second escape of 'doing nothing'. In the total subsumption, the mutations of capital affect the constituent as much as they do the constituted.

Viewed on its own, the constituent can become a pervasive force of lack, because in the total subsumption it is incomplete without the constituted. I had separated the constituent and constituted. That being said, I cannot see how I could have explored this crisis in any other way. If the constituent and constituted are conflated, how can you learn and understand the difference between the two without, at least temporarily, separating them? Nonetheless, with this separation I, in essence, set the stage for my own alienation from my immediate reality.

The manifestations of this alienation are revealed as I continually place myself into positions of lack: I place myself into a position of apathy; as a zombie; as uninformed; within arrested adulthood; as inferior to men; as not making a difference, and on the other extreme, as being better than others, among other such binarized positions.

We can see the culmination of this alienation in chapter seven, in my second attempt at escape. If I already escaped the constituted, where does an escape from the constituent lead? Or put in another way, what happens to a zombie that has nothing left to eat? In my case, I think I started to consume myself; I began erasing myself. The constituent left to its own devices will mutate into a constituted force, an infinite closure of its own. My second attempt at escape literally brought me into the center of the crisis within the total subsumption. An identity crisis. I found my self in an anomic void: nothing seemed possible.

My identity was already on shaky ground at the start of this thesis. As I embraced my constituent zombie self I had already begun searching for an identity, but nothing seemed to fit

quite right. This brought me to my first 'doing nothing' and this was satisfying for a while, as I followed my immediate desires. But then this started to unravel into a different sort of identity crisis, one based on lack as I continuously examined and deconstructed myself for the purposes of this thesis.

I wanted a brand new identity. But I couldn't buy that identity, consumption wasn't enough, I could see through it, and yet I didn't really know what else to do without buying it. How can you have a new identity without new stuff? But ironically, I didn't really want anything either. It's not like I had this image of this shiny, brand new identity in my mind. I had nothing. But you can't live without consuming to some degree. It's not possible, so I got lost. I just gave up, and stopped caring. Since it's impossible to not consume at all I, I just stopped being conscious of what I bought. To be fair, I didn't go on some sort of shopping spree instead either. But I also rejected what I had come to know as my identity, because I looked at myself and all I saw was shallowness – even the good things about my identity, I saw how even noble things were linked to consumption, and felt like they were pointless. I didn't want what I already had, and I really couldn't think of anything new I wanted either. I was just in this floaty desire-less place. Life still went on, I didn't let up on my life responsibilities. But I just felt empty a lot of the time. I didn't see the point in life. Or my work. I slept a lot. I had this vague memory of being really passionate and excited about life... but I just couldn't remember where that passion came from.

My only desire was to get that feeling back, but I didn't know how; I couldn't remember what I did before that was different. Before just a walk on a sunny day made me happy. Now, the sun seemed meaningless. I became a bit of a shut-in. I didn't feel like being with people, and working on this thesis got very stressful. I felt like I had so much work to do on it, and that I never had enough time to do it. There was always still so much writing to do. And this became a good excuse to avoid other people. I didn't visit my family at home very much and overall I

avoided outings by saying I needed to work. This was true, although I can't say I really accomplished much in this time. I mostly read, as I found it almost impossible to write from such an empty place.

There were a few people close to me that I did spend some time with and confided in. Both men and women close to me in my life tried to reason with me, but it just didn't work. I could always find a counterpoint to bring myself back into lack. I was whiny, angry, and started lots of pointless arguments.

Although reasoning didn't quite work at first, I'm not one to quickly dismiss the words of people I love and respect. Many of my loved ones' words stuck with me. I was also aware that something was just not right with me. A memory of my joyful self lingered and I had to find a sense of self again. I was quite aware that I had erased my sense of self, deconstructed to a point of oblivion and I knew I had to reconstruct a new self, but I still didn't know where to start, nothing really interested me.

Somewhere along the line, I started reaching out to other people in my life and as I opened up and began living life again: I stopped being a shut-in, I went out, I tried really hard to be happy – some of this was fake, but just the act of it opened me up to some new, and desperately needed collisions. I also sought out some support from others who had been through the process of autoethnography. In a few weeks certain things started to come together in my mind, words and interactions with people as well as a few poignant pieces of literature helped me see my mistake, and the inadequacies of my understandings. Simone Bignall's (2010) article, "Desire, apathy and activism", was especially helpful in combination with the other collisions in my life.

In Bignall, I came across the concept of "partial relations". I have discussed this concept previously in this thesis, and it was quite pivotal in my overall understandings. Although before

reading Bignall I had a sense of partial relations in terms of the way assemblages worked – it wasn't until I read Bignall's article and she phrased it in this particular way that it clicked with me. Suddenly, I could see where I went wrong. It seemed so simple and obvious. I was thinking in entire entities instead of partial relations. I was thinking about myself as a whole and closed 'self' instead of a complex self. I lost sight of an infinite self.

Escape gone wrong

I've been throwing EVERYTHING away. Everything that had something wrong with it I threw it away. Every part of my self that had something wrong with it – I threw it away. I deconstructed and threw it all away. And I was trying to create a new more productive identity out of something new- something outside myself. No wonder I felt like shit. I was trying to do something impossible.

*It's not about throwing **everything** away. I forgot that I need to scavenge through the old stuff, and use some of it to create new stuff. I am my starting point. I need to take old pieces of me to create a new me. Not all the pieces. But pieces of the pieces.*

Just like the zombie apocalypse creates barriers for people and their freedom, so too does the crisis of power within total subsumption of capital. In both cases, these closures themselves, however, are part of the openings. This was my greatest misunderstanding of the political. I did not understand that the openings and closures *together* form an adequate understanding of the political. I finally understand what Negri meant when he said that the political has been inadequately theorized. When closely examining how my thesis has developed, it is clear that my focus was on finding the openings, following the constituent. I misunderstood the inadequacy of the political as being solely its conflation and confusion with the constituted force. This is certainly part of the inadequacy, but it is not the whole picture. From this understanding, it appeared to me that the an adequate understanding of the political was to see it as the constituent force.

But it turns out that what I was looking for was more than just the political. And true to the way that desire functions it is only now that I found it that I realize what I was looking for. All along I was looking for the political *and* the social, *together*. I was searching for a political subjectivity that could not lack, a subjectivity that could be abundant in every moment, everyone, and every part of myself. A subjectivity that was not limited by majoritarian states I could never attain without negating myself: male, bourgeois, white, and adult. It was not the political that I was looking for, but the multitude, with my own complex self is at the centre of this infinite assemblage that is always following the never-ending flow of desire. Ironically, I was searching for something that was there all along.

But without my escape going wrong I wouldn't be where I am now. I wouldn't be able to write what I am writing. It took losing my identity to find it. Sometimes the escape *is* the zombie and death is not always the end.

10. Happily Never After

In the typical zombie movie there is never a happy ending. Some end in complete despair (e.g., *Dawn of Dead*; Snyder, 2004), where it is insinuated that we have reached the end of humanity. Others may have a glimmer of hope, but there is always a struggle that accompanies this hope. The search for safety continues, as characters continue to search for places with more humans, or just a place with no zombies. Or if the zombies have been destroyed, there's always the one that got away. Most zombie movies end in a state of disutopia, with no definitive ending. In many ways the endings can be seen as beginnings, to a new cumbersome beginning of humanity, or merely the beginning to another movie sequel...

And so it seems with this thesis. At the end I feel like I have come back to the beginning, but this is a new beginning. In the previous chapter I discussed the unravelling of my identity; my identity crisis. And yet I did so without ever telling you what my identity was in the first place; what exactly was it that unravelled?

This is because it seems that it took losing my identity to find it, so to speak. When I realized my mistake of throwing everything away, I suddenly began to view my identity in terms of partial relations and saw things from a new perspective. I saw that the idea I had of myself before (my previous perceived identity as an individual self) was no longer adequate, but I also saw how pieces of that identity were based on infinite desire. I suddenly saw myself as pieces, a collage, an assemblage, changing and shifting. There was something coherent about these pieces and yet simultaneously completely incoherent – I myself am put together through infinite closings and openings. I saw myself as a complex self made up of more than just me; I (we) am (are) literally infinite. I am infinite through history in so many ways: parts of me come from my ancestors, from my family, my class background, the actual environments that I have lived and live in, and these parts of me will expand into the infinity of the future as they continue to collide

and express themselves in mutual collisions of joy.

My individual self as a whole was inadequate; however, pieces of that self could create an infinite and complex self. But since I had thrown everything out, I realized that I needed to search for all those pieces I was previously made up of so that I could construct a new and complex self in order to become more aware of my current desires. This new awareness of an infinite identity suddenly brought me back to life. This awareness suddenly sparked a desire in me to *understand*, rather than know, where I had come from.

Before I had started writing this thesis, I did indeed have a sense of myself. But this self was organized into generic, rigid categories: I come from a Polish, immigrant working class family; I live in small somewhat impoverished city, I have a strong Christian background, I'm female and heterosexual, I'm white, etc.

There's more and more things that I could have written about how I 'knew' who I was, but these were just descriptors, over-generalizations, that didn't really say anything about me, because I was not aware of my desires in relation to these descriptors. Writing about those things and positioning myself at the beginning would have only created a quarantine around myself – not only separating myself from you, but giving you more reason to separate yourself from me. Furthermore, at the time, I took those things for granted because they were just 'who I was': a static body with several ascriptions, as opposed to a body moving in and out of assemblages, with different capacities and desires depending on the assemblage.

Writing this thesis, as well as engaging in the thought process of this thesis, undid most of the things I 'knew' about myself. It's not that they had no meaning or significance at all, but rather that I only started to understand these things more clearly as I started to lose them (or let go of them?). On the one hand, I had to let go of them, they were the closures, the barriers that kept me from moving forward. But I let go a little too much, deconstructed too much and seemed to have

lost it all. It was the perception of this loss that threw me into my pit of lack.

Now I see how the above descriptors, although not untrue, cannot define me or really say anything complete about me. But these descriptors do come to form pieces of assemblages refiguring in each moment in different ways depending on what kind of moment of collision I am experiencing.

For instance, I now see some ways in which my family and class background might play a role in how I understand myself as a political subject. My parents grew up in communist Poland and left the country before it had formed a democracy. In fact, one of the main reasons my father left Poland was because of his dissatisfaction with the communist state; economic opportunity was very low, and faith in the government even lower. Governmental politics were never really discussed in my home, with the exception of some Polish politics that I did not understand and felt were largely irrelevant to my life here in Canada. I do not recall my mother ever talking about any sorts of politics. My mother's lack of engagement in politics, combined with my father's lack of confidence in government certainly might have seeped into my consciousness, with the political appearing in more subtle, constituent ways in my life instead.

Poland has a great history of struggle: war, poverty and, of course, much resistance. In this history I can begin to see myself and my family. Despite often struggling financially there was always much abundance in my home. There is a common stereotype that Polish people are cheap. There is certainly a kernel of truth here, however, I resent the lack that this statement suggests. How can one not be cheap, if they don't have much money to begin with? Coming from a history of poverty, it isn't so much that some Polish people are cheap, but perhaps it is rather that they have learned out of necessity how to live within their means as abundantly as possible; to persevere despite barriers. In fact, I am reminded of a history lesson, from when I attended Polish school on Saturdays as a child, about the repeated reconstruction of the royal

castle in the city centre in Warsaw. Despite being plundered and destroyed several times throughout history, the castle was always rebuilt; many times according to the original architectural plans. I can see the castle as representative of a people who have a history of poverty and suffering juxtaposed with great pride and will to persevere. Here I find another connection as to why my leanings towards the constituent might be so strong, why despite all obstacles and set backs I cannot help but to creatively produce myself from what at times might seem like rubble.

Moreover, I am struck by the strength of women in my family. Here I suddenly see myself as a woman in an assemblage of women, seeing an infinite history of resistance and counterpower⁴³. I can see this in myself, my mother, my sisters, my aunts, my grandmother and see that if this exists now, then it did before with all my ancestors. The women in my closest family are all fairly dominant: in general, in the home, the men do what the women tell them to do, not the other way around. Further, despite her poor English, I have always seen my mother stand up for herself, and for her children as well. Even now, I constantly see small, yet significant resistances from my mother, my sisters, and myself. This assemblage of women in my life may explain to some degree why my desire for resistance might be so strong, all my life I've been surrounded and socialized into it at home. Perhaps this is also why feminisms based on lack sparked such a violent reaction in me – I've always seen and been told how strong, intelligent and self-sufficient women are no matter what odds are set against them.

Even pieces of my environment come to form how might I understand myself. St Catharines is where I have spent the majority of my (emerging) adult life. This much like emerging adulthood, is a transient space full of hidden possibility as well as an infinite deferral of

⁴³ In this regard, I am heavily indebted to Kathy Skott-Myhre's (2009) article, "Of families, mothers, gardens and alchemy: Rethinking relations between women in youth work."

dead ends. St Catharines is a small to mid-sized (population 132,000), post-industrial city. The city might be seen as somewhat depressed, with the once strong manufacturing sector disassembling leaving many who once made up the secure working and middle classes unemployed. The small bulk of the city's wealth lies in retired seniors and perhaps some commuters who work in Toronto. The rest of the population is made up of students that go to the university and the college nearby, as well as other working-class people, and many other people who live in poverty. In essence, St Catharines might be the perfect space for arrested adulthood to fester. I live in a very nice (i.e., middle-class) neighbourhood that is split between student housing and middle to upper-class houses. I have walked by several lovely homes, perfect for raising a family in, with 'For sale' signs that have stood for ridiculous periods of time for such a desirable neighbourhood. In other words, adulthood appears hard to come by in St Catharines; other than the service industry, there is not much opportunity here, and very high competition even for lower level work. I, nor several young people I know living in St Catharines, don't have very high expectations of having careers and raising children in St Catharines (we certainly have some hopes though).

Just being at Brock University gives me a sense of this lack of possibility, this infinite deferral. It seems impossible to get any one to come out to anything, much less something political: the one "protest" I ever attended at Brock had about three people there. My experiences in such a space of low engagement, have certainly played a role in my antagonistic view of youth and more typical forms of political engagement. The lack of engagement at Brock, ironically, made me feel unengaged at/with Brock, and most of my engagement over the years turned instead to a Christian church community, where my own engagement was met with a mutual high engagement.

In this fairly contemporary Christian community high amounts of attention were paid to

relationships and social justice, and there was a strikingly large youth population for a church (i.e., there seemed like there was more young people here than old – which seemed odd to me coming previously from more conservative churches like the Christian Reformed Church and the Roman Catholic church). There was a huge focus at this church on poverty, which along with my previous Christian engagement might have come to shape some of my binarized views between the poor and the rich, as the church seemed to position itself and the congregation, and moreover, the Western world, as the bearers of privilege, compared to the rest of the world. We might see my desire for child sponsorship arising out of this space.

The church did, however, also challenge such binarized views of the global economic disparity, by having its own homeless shelter, thus serving the local community and acknowledging local economic disparities. Service at the shelter encouraged relationships between the volunteers and patrons of the shelter. Here I find the roots of some of my engagement with social justice at a level of micro relations. Mutual love and respect was encouraged in these relationships, however, the unspoken Christian binary between those who are saved and those who are not might certainly complicate these relationships. This could potentially result in a binarized view of the good Christian hero, and the one who needs to be saved⁴⁴. Further, the homeless shelter itself could be seen as a polarization of poverty in the local area, with other more subtle class lines being ignored, in some ways intensifying a self vs other approach. Although a fair amount of critical thought was applied to the examination of global capitalism, there was little to no engagement with class, race, gender, and other social inequalities that might come to make up the congregation itself. In some ways I felt this church offered fairly

⁴⁴ I would like to point out that this binary is actually complicated within Christianity itself, as the figure of Christ might be seen as an immanent figure, challenging this binary. Nonetheless, often Christ is turned into a transcendent figure, which has more to it than it seems on the surface, but for the purposes of this discussion I will leave it there.

bourgeois, or majoritarian, solutions to the problems of the world that often made me feel somewhat inadequate in relation. That being said, I am heavily indebted to my engagement with Christianity for my focus on everyday relationships as a place to locate social justice, in essence it provided me with an opening into the multitude as I now understand it.

The above all played roles in how I came to my understanding of the political. However, the above reflections are quite inadequate. I am very wary that in constructing these reflections I am only creating fictions – fictions that might enable me to act in more reasonable manners (in terms of Spinoza's 'reasonable man'), but fictions nonetheless that I am ready to reassess as different pieces of information and clues about myself, other people and situations arise, depending on how my desires respond. I now (try to) pay more attention to the shifting assemblage that I am taking part of in each moment.

The above is evidence that my awareness of myself in relation to my reality and desires has grown; but this awareness must keep growing and expanding to meet the demands of each new moment. However, even if you don't have this awareness you are forced to act on the information that you do have, even if it is inadequate information. It is in this sense that even now my positioning is blurred. For it is clear that I often act based on assumptions and fictions created about myself and others (i.e., the majoritarian) and will most likely continue to do so, although my new assumptions and fictions might be more adequate than the old (hopefully).

The above reflections can only ever be based on partial realities, because as soon as I have acknowledged them I have already begun the process of changing in relation to them. The above reflections may help me begin to understand, but they can never lead to a complete understanding. To adhere to any of these understandings in any permanent way runs the risk of limiting my capacities. My new found understandings do not allow me to position myself even now, because as Skott-Myhre (2008) phrases it, “as soon as we think we know who we are, we

can immediately see the possibility of who we might become” (p.7). And so my understandings of where I've come from shift and change as soon as I become aware of them, as suddenly they are pointing to all the places that I might go – and I've already left the building.

It is in this sense that I have formed, (and am constantly forming and reforming) my own understanding of myself as part of the multitude. This new political (and social) identity is based upon the complex self – an identity that changes and shifts according to its context, an ever becoming of the zombie child. Perhaps a similar process might be seen in how other emerging adults are forming new adult (or political) identities in this time of total subsumption.

It has been found that many young people are increasingly relying more on subjective markers of adulthood to self-define what adulthood means to them instead of allowing social markers to dictate this transition (Luyckx, De Witte & Goossens, 2011; Côté and Bynner, 2008). In a study about work engagement and burn-out among emerging adults, Luyckx et al. (2011) revealed that a sense of adulthood moderated the negative affects of one's perceived instability in life. In other words, those who subjectively defined *themselves* as adults had a protective factor, those who did not define themselves as adults were more prone to depression and burnout. At what age one defined themselves as an adult varied. In this sense, emerging adults are finding ways of understanding themselves in relation to their lives.

The questions I had at the beginning of this thesis, have not given me answers but have rather reaffirmed the questions, and the questions themselves have shifted, transformed and collided. It seems that my question 'what does it mean to be political?' is intricately connected to the question of 'what does it mean to be an adult?'. It seems that I am ending where I started. An obscure quote from Deleuze and Guattari (1987) comes to mind here: “Who will answer this answer? Actually, there is no question, answers are all one ever answers. To the answer already contained in a question one should respond with questions from another answer” (p. 110).

The true escape is always into the infinite unknown. The question. The unknown is full of infinite possibility. This possibility may be infinitely good, or, infinitely bad; but the point is, it is infinite, and that we each make up a part of that infinity. The answer to the answer is the question. The answer to the riddle of the crisis of power is to question it; being political is to ask the question, what is the political? And to never stop asking the question. It is in asking the questions that assemblages are built into our lives. It is in asking the questions that we become aware of our desires.

Awareness⁴⁵ is the key to bringing the social and political together, the constituent and constituted, the rejoining of the proletariat to the bourgeois. Only awareness can conquer alienation, can open the closings from within, and bring one into the multitude. It is perhaps with this same awareness that emerging adults are asking themselves the question, what does it mean to be an adult in my own reality? If the traditional pathways to the political affirmation of adulthood are slowly disappearing, young people might be forced to ask the questions that will create their own pathways into adulthood based on their own desires. Perhaps in asking the question 'what does it mean to be adult in my own reality?', they are finding the answer to the answer as also being the question: what does it mean to be political in my own reality?; what does it mean to join the multitude around me?

However, as I think about this I get scared. At the end of his *Ethics*, Spinoza (2000) reveals how rare it is for one to come upon awareness. Only a certain configuration of material and social conditions creates the possibility for awareness; a certain configuration of collisions. This awareness might be especially rare in capitalism, because we are basically trained to be unaware. What if we succumb to this unawareness? What if we all settle for the despair of the

⁴⁵ I would like to clarify that when speaking of awareness I am not referring to the psychology-based concepts of consciousness or self-awareness, but instead to an awareness of the immediate reality around one's self, in the moment. A state of zen might be a useful way to view the type of awareness I am referring to.

majoritarian? The majoritarian that is unaware of his lack? Isn't it in fact, the zombie's lack of awareness that makes it justifiable to kill without remorse?

In the preface to this thesis, I posited that emerging adulthood is both a space of great possibility, yet great emptiness and alienation. What if is the latter part of this space that prevails? What if we turn to an apathy that is not a constituent force, but rather the mutated constituted force of death; the young people who are so hopeless that the only place to turn is to depression, drugs and suicide? What if it is *this* infection that spreads completely and destroys humanity itself? As Deleuze and Guattari (1987) have explained before, the majoritarian is Nobody; the majoritarian negates himself. What they⁴⁶ leave out though is that we all try to achieve this impossible becoming – and to succeed in this becoming means the non-existence of humanity. Annihilation. What if it ends like in *Dawn of the Dead* (Snyder, 2004)? Here the characters escape the mall and those who make it out alive manage to sail away on a boat. They sail in search of an island, in hopes that they find a place untouched by the infection. As the credits role, we see that they get to an island only to be devoured. There is no hope.

⁴⁶ The works of both Deleuze and Guattari are vast, so it is possible they did not leave this out, but rather I have yet to come across it... or perhaps it is not there as it is absurd within the immanent framework (as will be explained in the next chapter).

**Alternate ending/beginning – Final/first thoughts
– I guess I mean the middle**

The above seems hopeless.... but this is only an illusion. To fear this sort of 'ending' is absurd. As Spinoza (2000) reveals to us, a free man does not fear death. One's own death is always in the abstract future. And the future does not ever really exist until it is the present. The future can only exist as a movie in our minds. It is so easy to get lost in the hope or despair of a movie, to get lost in the screen and forget the reality facing us.

We must not get caught up in the currently non-existent end, we need to go back to the middle. The middle is always now and here. If you are reading this right now, then the end has obviously not come. We are still here in middle.

This is not to say that the future should be completely disregarded, but rather that the future need be regarded under a “species of eternity”(III, Prop. 62, Dem., p. 272): not as something on its own, separate from now, but always in assemblage with the current and past conditions. Further, this future needs to focus on how we can now create more life, as opposed to prevent death. “A free man thinks nothing less than of death, and his wisdom is a meditation, not on death, but on life” (Spinoza, 2000, III, Prop. 67, p. 276).

It is also easy to forget that the characters in the movies are really just actors. Just like the characters, the majoritarian is a fiction, a fiction that can be re-written and already is always in the process of being re-written. My life does not need to be a fiction, I have the power to write my part in reality. This power lies in my awareness. I don't know exactly how I got here, but I cannot help but to desire awareness. Collisions with other bodies of awareness have brought to light this desire in me. The more awareness I experience, the more awareness I desire. It's a domino affect of desire that started long before I wrote this thesis. Much like alienation spreads like the zombie infection, so too does awareness. In fact, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggest

that this is the way all ideas are spread, all life is spread: through contagion, the simple interaction, or collision, between bodies.

Where exactly my awareness came from is impossible to pinpoint – it has come from everywhere in pieces. These pieces have come together within a unique configuration of social and material conditions. As such, *I* am not *responsible* for my own awareness. Only my desires in collision with the desires of other bodies creates this awareness. Awareness is an assemblage that I desire to be a part of. Once you are part of the assemblage of awareness, there is only one responsibility: I am responsible for following my (our) desires in each moment, and to create as best as I can a collision of mutual joy to the best of my abilities/capacities in that moment. This responsibility is as profoundly difficult, as it is simple. This requires high amounts of awareness of self and other and the relation of the two to each other in each moment. Because awareness is not a choice, when you experience awareness you want to follow it as much as possible so that you can create an assemblage for others to have the opportunity to become aware. But all you can ever provide is this opportunity: you cannot force awareness onto someone else, they can only engage with it themselves. This is why Spinoza says that awareness is rare: it takes a unique constellation of accidental collisions to bring it about. But it seems that perhaps we are now in a time and space in which the conditions for colliding with this sort of awareness is heightened (Negri, 1996).

Within the total subsumption, capital creates more openings because it needs to dominate more and hence more openings need to be made for the production that is to be dominated. But what capital cannot control is that the openings are two-sided. The more holes capital creates in order to dominate more of the constituent force, the more spaces the constituent has to escape through. You cannot have infinite capital because the moment capital becomes infinite is the moment it ceases to be capital; surplus without value (Casarino & Negri, 2008, p. 31). Ironically

capital may very well be its own demise: the more it tries to control us, the more we search for freedom.

As was discussed at the beginning of this thesis, Marx tells us that the mode of production holds its own limitations, as well as potential solutions; in other words, it functions as tool-and-result. Although social labour seems to hold precarious outcomes for the majority of people, particularly young people, it might also hold the seeds of its own demise. Although emerging adulthood can indeed be a space of great alienation, as a large portion of my autoethnography has revealed, it is also in emerging adulthood, that I see a potential space for where the seeds of awareness may thrive.

Something that has not been discussed at length is that emerging adulthood is not a stage of life that is available to all young people in this age group. One of the major critiques of Arnett's theory is its lack of substantial engagement with class and other forms of social inequality. It has been suggested that emerging adulthood is a stage of life that occurs primarily for those who pursue post-secondary education (Hendry & Kloep, 2010).

Concerns have been raised about the “forgotten half” of emerging adults who do not attend college. For the forgotten half, incomes have dropped some 20% to 30% in the past 2 decades [Halperin, 2001], and the lack of advanced credentials can constitute a serious career obstacle. (Schwartz et al., 2005, p. 205).

It is unclear if those who do not attend post-secondary institutions have the opportunity to experience the sort of prolonged transition to adulthood proposed in emerging adulthood (i.e., a time of prolonged identity exploration), or if this prolonged transition does occur but manifests itself in different ways (Schwartz et al., 2005). In other words, it is argued by some that emerging adulthood is a space occupied primarily by middle-class (old bourgeois) youth, those who can afford (or more accurately, whose parents can afford) to pursue the accumulation of identity

capital, particularly in the form of educational qualifications (Hendry & Kloep, 2010; Côté & Allahaar, 2006). Although I agree that the forgotten half is to a large degree denied access to many of the luxuries of emerging adulthood, I myself challenge the notion that this is a population made up solely of youth coming from middle-class (old bourgeois) families. I come from a working class family, and afford post secondary education through a combination of loans and scholarships⁴⁷. In this sense, as others have revealed (Schwartz et al., 2005) emerging adulthood is still a heterogeneous space, although the forgotten half may remain largely forgotten.

For the purposes of this thesis, however, I would like to engage with emerging adulthood precisely in the classed space it appears to be occupying⁴⁸. Côté and Bynner (2008) explain the '30/30/40 society' into which late-stage capitalist economies are moving towards:

The '30/30/40 society' [Hutton 1995] refers to a labour market in which there is, at the top (educated) end (40%), enhanced opportunity, career prospects and stable earnings, compared with, at the bottom end, labour market experience characterized mainly by unemployment or those 'out of the labour market' engaged in childcare (30%). In the middle are 'patchwork careers' (30%), mixing casual work, or jobs without progression, interspersed with spells of unemployment [Bertram 2000]. (p. 255)

Emerging adulthood could be largely placed in the middle 30 section (and perhaps to some degree in the bottom 30 with the 'forgotten half'), which I think puts these emerging adults in a very unique and interesting position. In this position, we have individuals who have relatively low amounts of economic capital, yet growing amounts of identity capital combined with high expectations. One of Arnett's (2007) key findings in interviews with emerging adults is that they

⁴⁷ Although I clearly compensate for my lack of economic capital with some sort of identity capital which predispositions me for success in post-secondary education, which converts into economic capital in the form of scholarships.

⁴⁸ Although I am choosing not to engage with the 'forgotten half', this does not mean I do not see this as a space with a high potential for awareness as well. However, not being able to relate to the 'forgotten half' I do not think this autoethnography is the place to engage with this population at great length.

are they very hopeful and optimistic about their futures, despite the obstacles. Such a combination of qualities might create a space for an intensification of the new post-Marxist class struggle, but also a space of potential escapes.

On the one hand, there is an escape that could be based on bourgeois pride. Pride, according to Spinoza (2000) is one of the more difficult passions to correct because it is derived from pleasure (IV, Prop. 56, Sch.). As was discussed earlier, to Spinoza, pride is the greatest impotence of the mind and hence the greatest depoliticization of the multitude.

But it is within the pleasure of pride that I suddenly see a potential for awareness to arise. Pride and privilege are indeed difficult to give up, but I would argue that capital is physically forcing many out of their privileged positions. As mentioned previously many emerging adults come from the middle-class (old bourgeois) but as they enter the work force they are not gaining the success expected, the old bourgeois is more and more becoming the old proletariat in disguise. Suddenly, the subjectivity of pride and privilege of the bourgeois becomes juxtaposed with the concrete deprivation of the proletariat.

In this thesis, I have talked a lot about “doing nothing” and how this language covers up many aspects of my reality. Perhaps some of this language can be seen as a result of the lack created by the consumption-as-production within the total subsumption. Social labour makes it seem like I'm doing nothing because capital is not making a return on my investments (M-C-M'): my labour is not producing the profit that is supposed to come at the end. The formula is not working for me – it might be working for some people – but it's possible other young people feel the way that I do. We are now more educated than previous generations, and yet despite all this excess of social work we are not benefiting from capital⁴⁹. It is easy to get discouraged when, as

⁴⁹ For example, previous generations could find employment, with little to none post-secondary education (Côté & Allahar, 2006).

Côté and Allahar (2006) point out, it takes about 15 months for half of university graduates to find full-time employment, which results in many settling for employment in unskilled and low-paying positions. We are not getting much in return for our years of efforts and capital has promised a lot more than we are getting.

In many ways capital has promised the American dream to those within late-stage capitalism. With the ideology of meritocracy running rampant perhaps I could go as far as to say that the American dream has become the American 'promise'. The dominant image that we live by is abundance: we are constantly fed images of the rich and famous, and even around us we might try to uphold these images in our lives if only in appearance. It's not enough to just get by, capital suggests that we should thrive. This is perhaps in some cases more than a desire, but now an expectation. This is an expectation that capital (and the corporate media) itself has created in us. Furthermore, I would argue that such expectations and sense of entitlement are what might differentiate emerging adults from adolescents: emerging adults are legally defined as adults and yet do not have the power or capital to enact adulthood as capital promises it. In the context of the dual subjectivity created in the total subsumption, arrested adulthood is none other than arrested "bourgeois-hood" and the American promise appears to be broken. "Deprivation, in other words, may breed anger, indignation and antagonism, but revolt arises only on the basis of wealth, that is a surplus of intelligence, experience, knowledge, and desire" (Negri & Hardt, 2004, p. 212). Capital itself maybe revealing the fiction of the majoritarian with the very conditions it creates. This I would argue may create a new potential for pride, a pride that is based on a surplus of identity capital, not a lack, because capital itself has taught us that we are worth more than capital is making us worth now.

The above reveals several potential movements of a forced withdrawal of the bourgeois, a withdrawal of the majoritarian. On the other hand, I would argue that emerging adulthood also

holds the possibility for a different escape, an escape into the constituent: the simultaneous rising of the proletariat, or minoritarian, based on desire.

Emerging adulthood may be a unique space in which the potential for awareness is intensified. Emerging adults live in an increasingly anomic, or normless, society in which there is more freedom, however, social inequality has also increased (Côté & Allamar, 2006). With emerging adults being on the more disadvantaged end, this is not only an intensified space of the new proletariat, but based on economic means a space of the old proletariat as well. With less and less structural guidance, Schwartz et al., (2005) suggest that identity formation in emerging adulthood might be seen as based more on self-socialization, or individualization. Here we might see where capital tries to take advantage of the anomie of society and the precarious state of young people's identities by offering prepackaged identities based on lack (Côté & Allamar, 2006). However, since emerging adults are increasingly losing economic capital, consumption-as-production becomes more and more burdensome. Perhaps, if you don't have the economic means to consume your identity, you might start to creatively produce your identity instead: arrested bourgeois-hood can also become perpetual proletariat-hood. I would like to propose that emerging adulthood might be seen as a space in which one needs to rely more than ever on their desires in order to creatively produce an identity. This creative production of the self requires awareness. However, I would argue that social labour may be in fact creating the opportunity for awareness, particularly for emerging adults, as at the heart of the accumulation of identity capital is the interaction of bodies: the more identity capital one seeks to acquire the more collisions with diverse bodies one must have. The glaring problem here is that the increase of collisions can actually result in more collisions of consumption, as one may be unaware and consume bodies in these collisions as opposed to engaging in an awareness of now, self and other, in order to create and expand oneself in collision with the other. But this is where you and I as part of the

multitude, have the opportunity to come in. By endeavouring to live in awareness we create the opportunity for someone to collide with that awareness. The more one collides with awareness the more likely that contagion will occur.

We can see this contagion already occurring. One common misconception about youth, and emerging adults in particular, is that they are self-focused and individualistic (Arnett, 2007). But there is some research to suggest that such claims are over-stated (Arnett, 2007; Arnett, Ramos & Jensen, 2001). In a study examining the ideological view of emerging adults, Arnett et al. (2001) found that emerging adults were split almost equally between valuing ideologies of autonomy and ideologies of community. Furthermore it was found that some young people in the study found that individualism and community were reconcilable. Certainly some people displayed more individualistic tendencies than others. I myself am an example; however, as this autoethnography has revealed I am also often struggling against this individualism and would not be surprised if others are as well.

Furthermore, we can see young people using consumption against itself in order to creatively produce and challenging consumption-as-production as the only way left to produce within the total subsumption. For instance, we might be able to see a sense of ethical awareness arising in the reactions to the inadequacies of consumption based movements (i.e., fair trade, consumption based green movements, etc.). From young (and old) people pledging to “Shop second-hand first”⁵⁰ or to not shopping all⁵¹; as well as young people starting their own ethical business models (i.e., See *Save the Children, Me to We*). We can even see a transformation of consumption into a full-out sense of giving and receiving; for instance, if we look at the couch surfing movement. Couchsurfing is hospitality network that goes so far as to eliminate the idea of

⁵⁰ See <http://www.thecitizenrosebud.com/2011/04/shop-second-hand-first.html>

⁵¹ See <http://www.thegreatamericanappareldiet.com/>

direct exchange: young people all over the world offer up their homes and 'couches' for free without the favour ever needing to be returned⁵². The above are only a few examples of such spaces of awareness and creative production based on what is already there.

Although I have focused on the unique potentials for emerging adulthood to create an opening into the multitude, I do not think these potentials are limited to this space⁵³. As explained above, I see a potential intensification in which the majoritarian might withdraw, while the minoritarian rise up and produce itself. However, if this intensification does indeed lie in this space, it should be interesting to take note that there is evidence that this space may be growing. Part of Arnett's (2000) theory fits quite nicely with the historical tendencies of capital: Arnett predicts that the more industrialized a country becomes the more widespread emerging adulthood becomes. There is some evidence to support Arnett's claim. The transition from youth to adulthood has been increasingly prolonging since the 1960s, with a "continual decade-by-decade elongation of the transition" occurring (Côté & Bynner, 2008, p. 254). Following these trends it is possible that this transition will continue to prolong, ironically pushing adulthood further away, creating more and more opportunity for arrested bourgeois-hood to become perpetual proletariat-hood; to become the becoming zombie child: the ultimate force of death combined with the ultimate life force. But only time can tell if zombies will be brought back to life.

Only in time will we be able to see how the social and material conditions play themselves out and what the multitude can do with these conditions. And only in time can we see how we might be a part of this multitude. This time is of course, now. Pieces of the multitude are everywhere – we only need to start piecing them together, and to do this is a matter of noticing what is already there. We need to notice our surplus desires spilling over into each other. Which is

⁵² See <http://www.couchsurfing.org>

⁵³ In fact, some of the above movements may point to movements that have been happening all along in the 'forgotten half' based out of pure necessity.

why the questions I have explored in this thesis need to become *your* questions; *our* questions.

How do your own understandings of the political make you become a zombie? What drains you and makes you feel lifeless? How do you infect others with this lifelessness? And yet despite feeling lifeless, why are you still here? What keeps you fighting the zombie? And what's keeping you from bringing that zombie back to life instead? Are you fighting one zombie forgetting there are other zombies in the horde, other zombies that desire what you desire? Other zombies that have come back to life and don't want to devour you, but join you?

I hope that in this thesis you may have found an opening to insert yourself into, as I leave you with my final question: What can you *do* in your multitude, *now*?

References

- Anderson, P. W. S. (Director). (2002). *Resident Evil* [Motion picture]. United Kingdom: Constantin Film Produktion.
- Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55, 469-480.
- Arnett, J. J. (2007). Emerging adulthood, a 21st century theory: A rejoinder to Hendry and Kloep. *Child Development Perspectives*, 1(2), 80-82.
- Arnett, J. J., Ramos, K. D., & Jensen, L. A. (2001). Ideological views in emerging adulthood: Balancing autonomy and community. *Journal of Adult Development*, 8(2), 69-79.
- Arnett, J. J. & Tanner, J.L., (2009). The emergence of 'emerging adulthood': The new life stage between adolescence and young adulthood. In A. Furlong (Ed.), *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood: New Perspectives and Agendas* (pp. 39-45). New York: Routledge.
- Banaji, S. (2008). The trouble with civic: A snapshot of young people's civic and political engagements in twenty-first-century democracies. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 11(5), 543-560.
- Berry, C. (2008). Labour's lost youth: Young people and the labour party's youth sections. *Political Quarterly*, 79(3), 366-376.
- Bignall, S. (2010). Desire, apathy and activism. *Deleuze Studies*, 4, 7-27.
- Bishop, K. W. (2010). The idle proletariat: Dawn of the Dead, consumer ideology, and the loss of productive labor. *The Journal of Popular Culture* 43(2), 234-48.
- Blais, A., & Loewen, P. (2009). *Youth electoral engagement in Canada*. Research report prepared for Elections Canada [PDF document]. Retrieved from http://www.elections.ca/loi/res/youeng/youth_electoral_engagement_e.pdf
- Bourdieu, P. (2001). The forms of capital. In M. Granovetter & R. Swedberg (Eds.), *The*

- sociology of economic life* (2nd ed.) (pp. 96-111). Cambridge, MA: Westview Press.
- Boyle, D. (Director). (2002). *28 Days Later* [Motion picture]. United Kingdom: DNA Films.
- Bynner, J. (2005). Rethinking the youth phase of the life-course: The case for emerging adulthood? *Journal of Youth Studies*, 8(4), 367-384.
- Casarino, C. (2003). Time matters: Marx, Negri, Agamben, and the corporeal. *Strategies: Journal of Theory, Culture and Politics* 16(2), 185-206.
- Casarino, C., & Negri, A. (2008). *In praise of the common: A conversation on philosophy and politics*. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press.
- Côté, J. E., & Allahar, A. L. (2006). *Critical youth studies: A Canadian focus*. Toronto: Pearson Education Canada.
- Côté, J. E., & Bynner, J. (2008). Changes in the transition to adulthood in the UK and Canada: the role of structure and agency in emerging adulthood. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 11(3), 251 -268.
- Currie, A. (Director). (2006). *Fido* [Motion picture]. Canada: Lion Gate Films.
- Cushion, S. (2007). Protesting their apathy? An analysis of British press coverage of young anti-Iraq war protestors. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 10(4), 419-437.
- Deleuze, G. (1995) Postscript on the societies of control. In *Negotiations*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1983). *Anti-oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. (R. Hurley, M. Seem & H. R. Lane, Trans.). Minneapolis: Minnesota Press. (Original work published 1972)
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia* (B. Masumi, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published 1980)

- Descartes, R. (1901). *Meditations on first philosophy* (J. Veitch, Trans.). Retrieved from <http://filepedia.org/files/Descartes'%20Meditations%20on%20First%20Philosophy.pdf>
- Elections Canada (2010). *Estimation of voter turnout by age group at the 2008 federal general election*. Research report prepared for Elections Canada [PDF document]. Retrieved from http://www.elections.ca/loi/res/estim/estimation40_e.pdf
- Ellis, C. & Bochner, A. P. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflectivity researcher as subject. In Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research second edition* (733-768). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Fleischer, R. (Director). (2009). *Zombieland* [Motion picture]. United States: Columbia Pictures.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1, An Introduction*. New York: Vintage.
- Gunn, J. (2003). *Dawn of the dead* [Screenplay]. (Based on original screenplay by George Romero). Retrieved from http://www.horrorlair.com/movies/scripts/dawnofthedead_2004.pdf
- Hardt, M. (1998). The withering of civil society. In E. Kaufman, and K.J. Heller, (Eds.), *Deleuze and Guattari. New Mappings in Politics, Philosophy, and Culture* (pp. 23-39). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (2004). *Multitude: War and democracy in the age of empire*. New York: The Penguin Press.
- Hanisch, C. (2009). *The personal is political*. Retrieved from <http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html>
- Hendry, L.B., & Kloep, M. (2010). How universal is emerging adulthood? An empirical example. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 13(2), 169-179.

- Henn, M., Weinstein, M., & Wring, D. (2002). A generation apart? Youth and political participation in Britain. *British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, 4(2), 167.
- Jagger, A. M., (1983). *Feminist politics and human nature*. Sussex, UK: The Harvester Press Limited.
- James, A. (2004). Understanding childhood from an interdisciplinary perspective: Problems and potentials. In P. B. Pufall & R. P. Unsworth (Eds.), *Rethinking childhood* (pp. 25-37). New Brunswick: Rutgers.
- Kaufman, M. (1999). Men, feminism, and men's contradictory experiences of power. In J. A. Kuypers, (Ed.) *Men and Power* (pp. 59-83). Halifax: Fernwood Books.
- Kawano, Y. (Director), & Inafune, K. (Producer). (2006) *Dead Rising* [Video game]. Japan: Capcom Production.
- Keiser, M. (2000). Young adults and civic participation. *National Civic Review*, 89(1), 33.
- Kimberlee, R. (2002). Why don't British young people vote at general elections?. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 5(1), 85-98.
- Kinser, A. E. (2004). Negotiating spaces for/through third-wave feminism. *National Women's Studies Association Journal*, 16(3), 124-153.
- Kivel, P. (2002). *Uprooting racism: How white people can work for racial justice*. Gabriola Island, B.C., Canada: New Society Publishers.
- Lee, J. (Director). (2008). *Zombie Strippers* [Motion picture]. United States: Stage 6 Films.
- Luyckx, K., De Witte, H., & Goossens, L. (2011). Perceived instability in emerging adulthood: The protective role of identity capital. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 32, 137-145.
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1978). *The Marx-Engels reader* (2nd ed.; R. Tucker, Ed.). New York: W. W. Norton.

- McNally, D. (2006). *Another world is possible: Globalization and anti-capitalism*. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Pub.
- Macintosh, A., Robson, E., Smith, E., & Whyte, A. (2003). Electronic democracy and young people. *Social Science Computer Review*, 21(1), 43.
- McRobbie, A. (2004). Post-feminism and popular culture. *Feminist Media Studies*, 4(3), 256-264.
- Morrow, V. (May, 2003). *Conceptualizing social capital in relation to children and young people: Is it different for girls?* Unpublished paper presented at Gender and Social Capital Conference, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada [PDF document]. Retrieved from http://www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/conferences/gender_socialcapital/morrowpaper.pdf
- Negri, A. (1996). Twenty theses on Marx: interpretations of the class situation today. In S. Makdisi, C. Casarino, and R. Karl (Eds.), *Marxism beyond Marxism* (pp. 149-180). New York: Routledge.
- Negri, A. (1999). *Insurgencies: Constituent power and the modern state*. (M. Boscagli, Trans.) Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Newman, F., & Holzman, L. (1993). Chapter 3: Practice - Vygotsky's tool-and-result methodology and psychology. In, *Lev Vygotsky: Revolutionary scientist*. London: Routledge. Retrieved from <http://www.marxists.org/archive/vygotsky/works/comment/lois1.htm>
- O'Toole, T., Lister, M., Marsh, D., Jones, S., & McDonagh, A. (2003). Tuning out or left out? Participation and nonparticipation among young people. *Contemporary Politics*, 9(1), 45-61.
- Papps, F. (2010). "Cosmopolitan, Baby Gap G-Strings, and Pied-A-Terre Kitten Heels":

Commodity feminism and the production of the postfeminist woman in *Bridget Jones's Diary*. Paper presented at the *Marxism and Psychology Conference 2010*. Conference held at the University of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, Canada.

Pichardo, N. A. (1997). New social movements: A critical review. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 23, 411-430.

Prout, A., & James, A. (1990). A new paradigm for the sociology of childhood? Provenance, promise and problems. In A. James & A. Prout (Eds.) *Constructing and reconstructing childhood: Contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood* (pp. 7-33). Basingstoke, UK: Falmer Press.

Richardson, L. (2000). New writing practices in qualitative research. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 17, 5-20.

Riley, S. C. E., Griffin, C. & Morey, Y. (2010). The case for 'everyday politics': Evaluating neo-tribal theory as a way to understand alternative forms of political participation, using electronic dance music culture as an example. *Sociology*, 44(2), 345-363.

Romero, G. (Director). (1968). *Night of the Living Dead* [Motion picture]. United States: Image Ten and Laurel.

Romero, G. (Director). (1978). *Dawn of the Dead* [Motion picture]. United States: Laurel Group.

Schwartz, S. J., Côté, J. E., & Arnett, J. J. (2005). Identity and agency in emerging adulthood: Two developmental routes in the developmental process. *Youth and Society*, 37(2), 201-229.

Skott-Myhre, H. A. (2008). *Youth and subculture as creative force: Creating new spaces for radical youth work*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Skott-Myhre, H., & Skott-Myhre, K. (2007, Fall 2007). Radical youth work: Love and community. *Relational Child & Youth Care Practice*, 20(3), 48-57.

- Skott-Myhre, K. (2009). Of families, mothers, gardens and alchemy: Rethinking relations between women in youth work. *Relational Child & Youth Care Practice*, 22(2), 5-16.
- Snyder, Z. (Director). (2004) *Dawn of the Dead* [Motion picture]. United States: Strike Entertainment.
- Soule, S., & Nairne, J. (2006). Are girls checking out? Gender and political socialization in transitioning democracies. *Conference Papers – Midwestern Political Science Association*, 1-17.
- Spinoza, B. (2000). *Ethics* (G.H.R. Parkinson, Ed. & Trans.). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Thomas, M., & Young, L. (June, 2006) *More subject than citizen: Age, gender and political disengagement in Canada*. Unpublished paper presented at the 2006 Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, York University, Toronto, Canada [PDF document]. Retrieved from <http://www.cpsa-acsp.ca/papers-2006/Thomas-Young.pdf>
- Twohy, M. (2008). *From voodoo to viruses: The evolution of the zombie in twentieth century popular culture* (Master's thesis). Trinity College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland.
- Vieta, M. (2007). *BusSoc 4041.6, lecture 1: Marx, alienation, and capital 101* [PDF document]. Retrieved from http://www.vieta.ca/SOSC4041/Lectures/BusSoc4041_Lecture1_Marx.pdf
- Weima, K. (2008). *My two families: An autoethnographic exploration of the internalized lived by and the externalized lived with family experience* (Master's thesis). Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada.
- Weller, S. (2006). Skateboarding alone? Making social capital discourse relevant to teenagers' lives. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 9(5), 557-574.
- White, C., Bruce, S., & Ritchie, J. (2000). *Young people's politics: Political interest and*

engagement amongst 14- to 24-year-olds. York, UK: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Widdicombe, S., & Wooffitt, R. (1995). *The Language of Youth Subcultures. Social Identity in Action*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Wright, E. (Director). (2004). *Shaun of the Dead* [Motion picture]. United Kingdom: Universal Pictures.